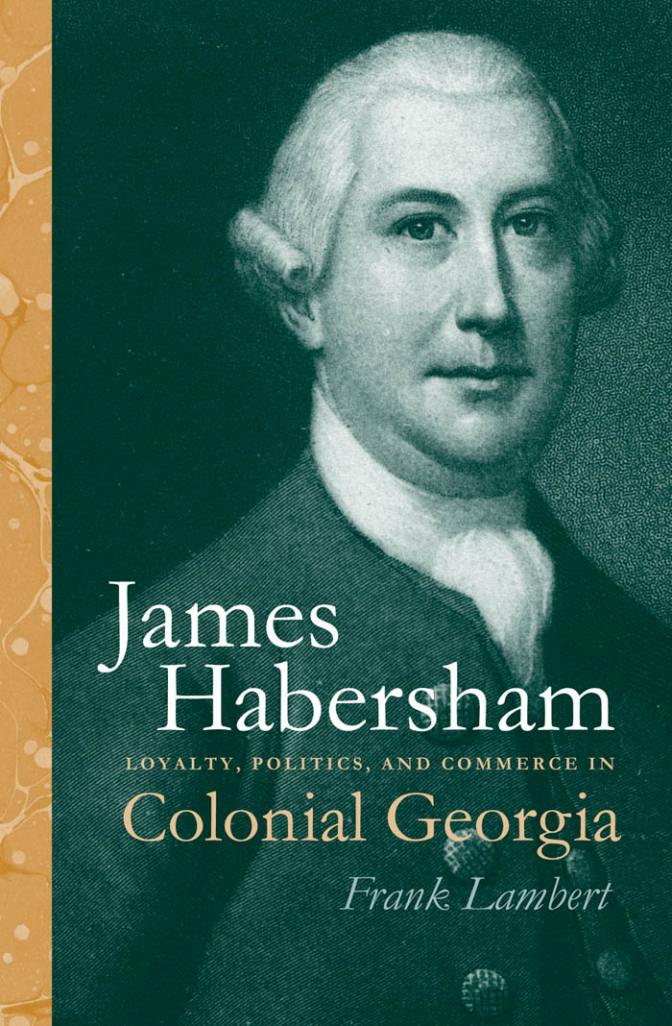

James Habersham

Loyalty, Politics, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia

Frank Lambert

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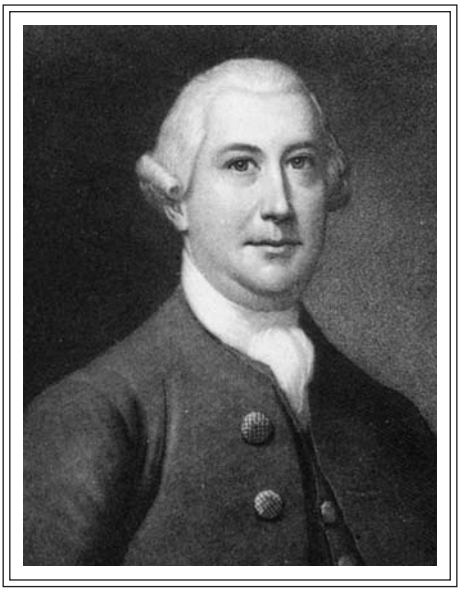

James Habersham

Loyalty, Politics, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia

FRANK LAMBERT

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James Habersham enjoyed the loving support of his family, especially during the trying years before the American Revolution. I, too, have a wonderful family who has provided much encouragement and endured endless discussion during the research and writing of this book. More importantly, as I forged intellectual links with Georgia, our two sons gave us warm and tender personal ties to the state. Will met his wife, Caroline Jones, when they worked together in Atlanta, and Talley married Paige Winburn of Athens. As always, my wife, Beth, gave the full measure of wisdom, patience, and love.

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Introduction

By all accounts, James Habersham was an early American success. Arriving in Savannah in 1738, he lived his first year in Georgia at public expense, but at his death in 1775, he had become one of the colony's most influential and prosperous citizens.[1] At the age of twenty-two, he left a promising future as a London merchant and came to Savannah as an inexperienced schoolmaster and zealous missionary. Having been converted to Methodism by George Whitefield, he helped the evangelist establish an orphanage in the new and struggling colony of Georgia. His new home confronted him with many challenges but also afforded him great opportunities, and he took full advantage of them. After serving as superintendent at Bethesda, Whitefield's orphan house, Habersham became Georgia's leading merchant and one of its biggest planters. By the time of his death, he was the third wealthiest person in the colony, earning from his plantations more than two thousand pounds sterling a year, an income that would have placed him comfortably among England's landed gentry. He also played a leading political role, serving as secretary of Georgia, president of the Council, and, for eighteen tense months in the early 1770s, acting governor.

And yet, history has been unkind to Habersham. The problem was, like many of colonial Georgia's leading men, James Habersham was a Loyalist. Within the charged atmosphere of the American Revolution, Patriots viewed Loyalists with contempt and loathing, and historians have paid him scant notice, a fate shared with others who take the wrong side in great causes. While his Patriot sons have been memorialized as early Georgia heroes, their father has received little attention. This biography is an attempt to tell Habersham's story, and it does so through the lens of loyalty. While his loyalty to King George III was perhaps misguided, it should not obscure the loyalty he displayed to his fellow Georgians during the struggling colonial period. Far from a vice, loyalty was a virtue in eighteenth-century America; it was essential for neighbors in pioneer communities, for trading partners engaged in transatlantic commerce, and for political allies embattled in struggles for power. James Habersham rose to prominence in large

part because he forged powerful connections for getting on in the Anglo-American world. His story then is very much about loyalty, expressed in his deep attachment to colonial Georgia, his close and enduring personal relations with friends and family, and his firm allegiance to the Crown.

Habersham's deep-seated loyalty to Georgia spanned thirty-seven years. Indeed, his adulthood coincided with most of Georgia's colonial period, from his arrival in 1738, just five years after James Oglethorpe and the first settlers scrambled up the Savannah bluffs, until the eve of the Revolution itself. Throughout that time Habersham's name was associated with most of the events that enabled the young, struggling colony to survive. He and business partner Francis Harris pioneered in opening direct trade between London and Savannah, a breakthrough that lowered planters' shipping costs and broke Georgia's dependence on Charlestown. His lobbying for slave labor was instrumental in the trustees' rescinding the ban on slavery, enabling thousands of Georgians to prosper by exploiting the labor of thousands of African Americans. He became a leading planter, exporting hundreds of barrels of rice annually and shipping the first cotton produced in the colony. And as secretary of Georgia and president of the Council, he played a major role in energizing provincial government, especially by promoting economic development. However, when the first royal governor, John Reynolds, sought to bypass the Council, Habersham led the fight to have him recalled.

After 1763, when Parliament sought to increase revenues from the colonies and tighten enforcement of trade regulations, Habersham's loyalties were put to the test. On the one hand, he defended Georgia's interests by protesting tax measures and trade regulations he deemed both unjust and unconstitutional. But on the other hand, he opposed those Georgians, including his three sons, who agitated for independence. As a Loyalist, he was convinced that it was in Georgia's best interest to remain connected with Britain. Though he aligned himself with the losing side in the American Revolution, he achieved a remarkable victory by keeping his family together with bonds of love and mutual respect that transcended political differences.

Habersham's story is filled with twists and turns that give his biography color and drama. His early years in Georgia were marred by frequent confrontations with the magistrates. In 1742 he was arrested and jailed for assaulting the parish minister in Savannah, charging, among other things, that the young cleric knew nothing of "true" Christianity. On learning of his uncivil and disruptive behavior, the trustees sent him a stern rebuke for

his intemperate behavior, pointing out that the struggling colony could ill afford religious zealots who put their private opinions ahead of the public good. Yet, within just seven years, those same trustees appointed him secretary of Georgia because they trusted him more than anyone else in the colony to send them honest, accurate reports on the state of the province. His economic fortunes underwent a similar transformation in a short period. In 1743 he resigned his post as superintendent of Whitefield's orphanage, a personal humiliation for one who had been so loyal to his evangelist friend. Whitefield had entrusted the orphanage to Habersham's care, expecting him to turn the institution's plantation into a profitable, self-sustaining enterprise. Citing high labor costs, he admitted failure and left his post. However, the determined and resilient Habersham was far from defeated; within four years he emerged as Georgia's leading merchant, the orphanage's major benefactor, and the architect of an economic development program aimed at reviving the languishing province.

As a human being, Habersham is an attractive subject for a biography. Optimistic, smart, determined, energetic, and honest, he gained the respect of most of those who had commercial or political dealings with him. He was not, of course, without human foibles. Given to rich food and sometimes to strong drink, he battled gout throughout the last decade of his life, so incapacitated at times that he had to be carried about Savannah as an invalid. And not everyone held him in high esteem. Some critics viewed his business ambition as greed, his political rectitude as brittle and inflexible, and his religious convictions as fanaticism. In his private life, he was a devoted husband and father who delighted in his wife and children and suffered greatly when his spouse and seven of his ten children died. Though he was a person of strong views, he encouraged his sons to think for themselves and make their own political and religious choices. In a remarkable letter to his son Joseph, who was in London during the Stamp Act crisis, Habersham refused to divulge his own stance and advised instead: determine your opinion "free from parental Influence."[2]

An attempt to understand and explain Habersham's success makes this book more than biography because it necessitates an examination of the places and times in which he lived. By exploring the structures that defined his possibilities and limitations and the relationships that enabled him to exploit human and material resources, we embark on a survey of colonial Georgia and its dealings with the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world. Such a review encompasses not only such physical realities as natu-

ral boundaries defined by climate and soil, but social, political, and economic structures that dictated the terms under which Habersham pursued success, including English evangelicalism, British imperial administration, and commercial capitalism. Although Habersham lived most of his adult life in Savannah, he operated within a global economy that was driven by the demands of a vigorous, competitive, and expanding commercial capitalism, albeit circumscribed somewhat by mercantilist strictures. The book looks at how a provincial entered highly competitive marketplaces, how he made the necessary connections to profit within it, and how he minimized risk. It also seeks to understand how political power actually worked in a British colony, which often differed from imperial prescriptions. What were competing sources of authority? What claims did the competing interests make? What were the limitations of political power, and how did the governed challenge their governors?

This survey of the eighteenth-century world is told in very human terms; that is, it is always viewed through the eyes of James Habersham, with his particular perspectives, biases, aims, and limitations. But it is more than just his story. Particular attention is paid to the many relationships that defined his existence. Habersham himself frequently credited his success to his many and strong connections, by which he meant the suppliers, customers, financiers, insurers, and shippers that enabled him to profit as a merchant; the overseers, slaves, and factors that allowed him to flourish as a planter; the governors, fellow councilors, colonial agents, and British imperial officials who gave him access to power; and his wife, children, relatives, and friends, who lent love and comfort to his domestic life. Although some of his relationships were those of equals seeking mutual advantage in their dealings, others were those of a superior exerting influence and control over dependents he deemed inferior. Indeed, Habersham played a major role in the introduction of slavery into Georgia. What strikes one who examines his thinking about slavery was the ease with which he determined that slavery was not only essential for Georgia planters but also a positive good for the slaves. Well versed in both the tenets of commercial capitalism and the principles of Calvinist Methodism, he reasoned from the former that a reliable supply of cheap labor was essential to producing profitable staples, while from the latter that eternal salvation of Africans' souls more than justified their physical bondage.

Habersham does not qualify as a typical colonist, nor is he so represented. He was better educated, wealthier, and more powerful than most.

But by examining Habersham's interactions with many different individuals and groups of persons, his biography illumines the lives of a broad spectrum of eighteenth-century colonial society from well-known figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Henry Laurens to those often overlooked or dismissed, including women, Native Americans, slaves, and Georgia "Crackers." By taking the journey with one traveler, then, we are able to stop at intersections and byways and catch a glimpse of the rich diversity that was colonial America.

CHAPTER ONE

London

Merchant Apprentice

At first glance, James Habersham's success in Georgia as a pioneering merchant, devout churchman, and loyal officeholder belies his early years in Beverley, a Yorkshire market town in the East Riding. Without question, he had come a long way from his birthplace, which he had been forced to leave because of the lack of opportunity, to make his mark in the distant and strange New World. Yet at a deep level the imprint of his childhood and the institutions that shaped it was enduring. In Beverley, Habersham was nurtured in an ordered world defined by the marketplace, the church, and the Crown, the same influences that would define his loyalties in Georgia.

James was born in Beverley's principal marketplace, literally in the shadow of the town's new market cross in Saturday Market. One of five market squares, Saturday Market was a bustling trade center where provincials poured in from surrounding villages and towns each week to buy and sell provisions, to shop for the latest goods from London, and to seek entertainment at the theater or library or perhaps at a horserace or cock fight. In 1770, in a reflective moment, Habersham observed, "I have been from my youth . . . immersed in commercial Business."[1] One could say he was born into the market, and there he remained.

He was also born into the church. Just off Saturday Market stood the parish church of St. Mary's. It was there on January 26, 1715/16, that "James, son of James Habersham, Dier," was baptized.[2] At a glance one could see the soaring presence of religion in Beverley with the towers of three parish churches as well as those of the magnificent St. John's Minster reaching for the heavens. The town's very existence was rooted in religion. Eight hundred years earlier, King Athelstan, grateful for a miraculous military defeat of the Scots after praying at Bishop John's tomb in Beverley, granted a group of secular canons a charter creating a sanctuary for a mile encircling the tomb. A settlement grew up around the church as cottagers and farmers

worked the minster lands and merchants provided a market for the agricultural produce. Gradually the canons granted a measure of autonomy to the townspeople, who began to shape their own political and ecclesiastical institutions. By the time of Habersham's baptism, St. Mary's, the first and largest of the town's parish churches, had a six-hundred-year history and served more than half of Beverley's nine hundred families.

As parishioners entered St. Mary's, they were reminded of the temporal as well as spiritual authority that governed their lives. Indeed, if the infant Habersham had looked above him on his baptismal day, he would have seen numerous angels and the four apostles, as well as the Holy Family, gazing down. The ceiling paintings assured parishioners that although their lives on earth were brief and uncertain, God ruled over an eternal kingdom where the faithful would live forever. Early in his life Habersham came to know firsthand just how fragile life could be: his mother died when he was seven years old, and his father perished when James was thirteen.

More than angels looked down on James's baptism from St. Mary's vaulted chancel ceiling. The painted visages of forty English kings reminded parishioners that while God reigned on high, the king ruled on earth through a web of legal and personal relationships that established important parameters for his subjects. The center of that web in Beverley was the town corporation, whose authority derived from a royal charter. Only members of the corporation, known as freemen, enjoyed the rights and privileges of citizenship, a distinction that applied to about 20 percent of the town's residents. Three years before James's birth, his father had been admitted as a freeman and burgess of Beverley, which meant that James entered the world freeborn, an important distinction in a society where one started life in a prescribed place and where one's fortunes depended in large part on the personal connections that that place afforded.[3]

Though ordered, Beverley was not a static world. As one tiny link in a dynamic trade network that was global in scope, the town faced the challenge of adapting to changing market demands. Failure to keep pace meant diminishing economic opportunities. Alas, by the time young James was ready to enter the workforce, Beverley had little to offer, having failed to maintain important connections to the far-flung Atlantic trade network. Forced to leave his hometown to seek fortune in London, James nonetheless took with him lasting impressions of Beverley's stability and order that guided his choices throughout his life.

When he left Beverley in the 1720s, James had no way of knowing that

his ultimate destination would be Britain's newest North American colony. In stark contrast to the structured world of Beverley, Georgia was a dangerous wilderness. There were no organized markets, no church, no government. Rivals from both sides of the Atlantic claimed the land between South Carolina and Florida, the expanse that in 1732 would become Georgia. At the time of James Habersham's birth, English, Spanish, and Native Americans engaged in the bloody Yamasee War, making Georgia anything but an inviting place for a freeborn Englishman. Yet we know that in 1738 at the age of twenty-two, James Habersham left his familiar English surroundings and entered the unfamiliar Georgia landscape. How he got from Beverley to Georgia is the subject of this chapter. Like many English immigrants to America, his was a two-step migration. First, he left Beverley soon after his mother's death in 1722 and moved to the great metropolis of London to gain a "competency" as a merchant apprentice. Then, in 1738, after a dramatic religious conversion, he left a promising future in the City to become a missionary and schoolmaster in Georgia. When he departed England, as it turned out never to return, Habersham took with him a set of powerful values that persisted in shaping his economic, religious, social, and political ideas.

Freeborn in Beverley

To understand the cultural baggage Habersham carried to America, we must first explore the world of his birth and early childhood. It was a place that impressed on him how society should be knit together and the proper authority by which people should pursue their daily bread and seek eternal salvation. It was a structured society where chartered institutions exercised powers and conferred privileges under the aegis of royal grants. But it was also a setting that underscored the uncertainties of life. James himself would leave Beverley as a young boy because of his father's reduced circumstances and because of declining economic opportunity in the town. He witnessed firsthand death's swift and devastating effects on families. James saw a younger brother and sister die, probably victims of the smallpox epidemic that swept through the town in 1720–21, killing more than 10 percent of the town's population.[4] Then, in 1722, his mother died, after giving birth to her seventh child in eight years.

Visitors commented favorably on early-eighteenth-century Beverley. In 1703, one sojourner noted that "this town is well built and very seemly; rich

and well populated." A later observer was impressed by the "handsome and substantial houses, the broad and clean streets, and the many and beautiful gardens."[5] Although we do not know the specific house where the Habershams lived when they welcomed James into the world, we do know that the residences that lined Saturday Market were more modest than those that evoked visitors' admiration. From architectural analysis of the few surviving dwellings, we know that a typical house was half timbered and modest in size, with a width prescribed by the beam that supported the first floor, about ten or eleven feet.[6] More important than the structure of the Habersham house, however, was the structure of society.

Located in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Beverley was situated on the slope of the chalk wolds above the Hull River's marshy flood plain. Its high ground on the hillside attracted settlers from the Iron Age onward. In his account of the eighth-century settlement that occupied the site, early English historian Venerable Bede called it "a virtual island in badly drained wetlands."[7] Several groups of people found the area attractive as a settlement, including monks and merchants. The most notable religious figure to arrive was Bishop John of York, who retired in Beverley early in the eighth century and whose tomb became a shrine. Arriving in the growing community that served the minster after its completion in the tenth century, merchants bought, sold, and exchanged provisions and goods.

Royal grants authorized the monks and merchants to establish the three great pillars of Beverley's society: the church, the corporation, and the market. At Habersham's birth two churches dominated the landscape. Daniel Defoe considered the Collegiate Church of St. John's, known as the minster, and St. Mary's, Beverley's largest parish church, to be the largest and finest parochial churches in the kingdom.[8] Located in the southern end of town, St. John's twin towers soared heavenward. The enormous gothic structure that rivaled in size and magnificence England's finest cathedrals had recently been renovated after having fallen into ruin.

At the north end of Beverley stood St. Mary's. The church in which James was baptized was an edifice whose magnificence bore testimony to the glory of God and the wealthy trade guilds that had largely funded its development. Though St. John's Minster overshadowed it, St. Mary's was an imposing Norman creation begun in the early twelfth century. The cruciform structure extended almost two hundred feet in length and more than one hundred feet in width, making it Beverley's second largest building. St. John's and St. Mary's towers were constant reminders to the towns-

people of the centrality of the church in their lives both in this world and in the hereafter. Inside its walls, St. Mary's, as did most medieval churches, provided in stone an architectural chronicle of the gospel. Parishioners could gaze on images and representations of biblical and local figures and thereby link themselves to a larger community of faith. More than six hundred ornately carved ceiling bosses told stories that reminded men and women and boys and girls that they were part of a great stream of God's people that extended far into the past, indeed all the way back to the Creation, and promised to the faithful a future protected by saints and angels.

The records of St. Mary's also bear personal testimony to the thousands of parishioners who were born into the church and interred within its burial grounds. Included are documents registering the Habersham family's most significant milestones. The Baptismal Registry records the birth of James and Elizabeth Habersham's firstborn, baptized on February 25, 1712, and christened James, but the infant died the following day. It also reveals that four years later, on January 26, a second son and the subject of this biography was also christened James. The registry notes the baptisms of six additional children over the next seven years. St. Mary's Burial Register bears witness to family tragedy. First, in 1722, Elizabeth died, leaving her husband with five children under the age of seven. Then, on November 14, 1729, her husband died, when James was thirteen years old and already gone from Beverley.[9] We know little about the boy's early religious leanings, but we do know that the church exerted great and continuing influence throughout his adult life. He remained a loyal son of the Church of England even after he became one of its severest critics as a follower of the Methodists, or New Dissenters. Yet he never left the church, and he died within its good graces.

The second great institution that defined the town of Beverley and influenced James Habersham's view of a properly ordered society was the town corporation. Initially, local government resided in the hands of the archbishop of York and the minster's chapter, but almost from the beginning, the clerics extended a measure of self-government to the town that grew up outside the minster walls. By the twelfth century, the townspeople petitioned Henry I for more autonomy. In charters granted in 1114–16, Henry I extended "free burgage" to Beverley, meaning that from thenceforth the townspeople would hold land under royal grants and would no longer be tenants of the minster. Moreover, these charters lodged governing power in the hands of the local guild merchants, an incorporated society with exclusive trading rights in Beverley.[10]

By the 1700s, the guild had evolved into a government, constituting a self-perpetuating corporation consisting of members known as freemen. Far from a democracy, Beverley was an oligarchy, with power resting principally in the hands of twelve aldermen who enjoyed lifetime seats on a self-perpetuating bench. The aldermen acted as the upper house of the municipal legislature, and each year they nominated twenty-six candidates for capital burgesses, the designation for the town councilors who made up Beverley's lower legislative house. From that number, the freemen would elect thirteen to serve. The freemen also chose a mayor from among the aldermen at an annual election to act as Beverley's chief administrative officer.

By the time of James's birth, his father and uncles had become freemen of the town corporation and had assumed positions of leadership. Although Beverley had an unusually high proportion of males admitted as freemen, or citizens, compared to the rest of England, they constituted only about 20 percent of the town's population in the late 1720s. A freeman was a privileged status, and Habersham's father, not himself freeborn, had the distinction of becoming a citizen and enjoying the cherished rights of a freeman. The *Minute Books of the Governors, of the Corporation of Beverley* for January 30, 1712, memorializes the occasion: "James Habersham Dyer [was] ordered to be admitted a ffreeman and Burgess of this Corporation he paying for a Fine for his freedom." Thus, three years before James's birth, his father became a citizen, a distinct privilege in eighteenth-century England.[11]

In becoming a freeman, the elder James Habersham was eligible to hold office. In 1727, the aldermen named him and his brother Daniel to the list of twenty-six nominees from which the freemen would elect thirteen as capital burgesses. Daniel was elected, and James was not. The following year, the aldermen again nominated James as well as his brother. Again, the freemen selected Daniel, denying James a seat perhaps because of his failing health.[12] Though he was never elected, his nominations to one of the town's governing posts suggest, nonetheless, that James Habersham enjoyed the respect of the political community and was deemed worthy of exercising political power.

The third pillar of Beverley's ordered society was the chartered market around which the town's economy revolved. Beverley was a market town, which meant that it enjoyed the royal privilege of holding markets under terms specified in the documents that authorized their existence. By the time of James's birth in 1715, Beverley held two markets, the Wednesday Market and the Saturday Market, with the latter being the larger and more important. Also by that date, the markets had become fixed institutions

whose sites were prominent features on the town's map. Trade in the markets thrived in part because of liberal provisions in their charters, especially tax exemptions that made Beverley a free trade zone. Indeed, Defoe thought Beverley owed much of its "flourishing Condition" in the early eighteenth century to its enviable charter, which gave merchants relief from "all manner of Imposts, Toll, Tallage, Stallage, Tunnage, Lastage, Pickage, Wharfage, and of and from all and every the like Exactions, payments and Duties" throughout England and Wales.[13]

As a market town, Beverley provided jobs directly related to retailing goods in the markets or processing raw materials from the surrounding region and converting them into saleable goods. The largest single group of workers, almost half the town's workforce, was involved in some form of processing or manufacturing. Occupations listed under the heading "Trades and Crafts" include artisans and workers engaged in such activities as matting, brewing, milling, tanning, textile making, rope making, woodworking, metal working, building, and dyeing. The next largest group, about 10 percent of all employed, were retailers, vending food and drink, clothing and textiles, and hardware.[14] Another 8 percent provided services that facilitated the flow of people and goods into Beverley, principally carters, watermen, and innkeepers. Rounding out Beverley's occupational structure was a small number of gentry, clergy, and professionals at the top and laborers, servants, and soldiers at the bottom.

As dyers, the Habershams were part of those processing materials for the market. While James's family lived within the town gates that were once part of the medieval walls, his father operated a dye works located in Beverley's industrial district on the south side outside Keldgate. Along with his brothers Daniel and John, James dominated what survived of Beverley's once flourishing dyeing industry.[15] Throughout the first two decades of the eighteenth century, their business prospered. Based on tax rolls, James was firmly ensconced in the "middling sort" of Beverley's ratepayers. However, his ability to provide for his family was slipping away, and his prospects of bequeathing to his oldest son a secure future at the dye works were dim. A weakening regional economy and his own failing health severely curbed the opportunities that the elder James could offer his children in Beverley.

By the early 1700s, Beverley was virtually cut off from much of the lucrative trade emanating from London. During its medieval heyday, Beverley had direct access to the sea via a beck or creek that connected the town's many quays to the River Hull, which flowed into the Humber, which emp-

tied into the North Sea. Trade flourished as "Ships and Boats, Keels, Wherries, Hoys, etc" came to Beverley "for the Lading and Unlading of all sorts of Merchandize." But by Habersham's birth, the Beverley beck had become impassable, clogged with silt. Having no "settled fund" to keep the waterway open, the corporation watched the town's major link to international commerce become choked and its wharves grow "out of Repair."[16]

Though isolated from ocean traffic, Beverley continued to thrive as a regional market town serving the East Riding. Taking its name from the large number of beavers that once inhabited the surrounding streams, Beverley had a population of industrious men and women. On one of his peregrinations, Daniel Defoe visited Beverley in the 1720s and noted that it still "keeps up its flourishing Condition, notwithstanding it's within Six Miles of so powerful a Rival as Hull," the port city on the Humber, which at times had 160 sails on the river loading and unloading cargo in the London and Dutch trades. The people of Beverley engaged in more local endeavors, processing and marketing produce from the countryside. According to Defoe, "the principal Trade of the Town [was] making Malt, Oat-meal, and tann'd Leather." In the seventeenth century, the "Clothing-trade" had been the primary industry but by the early eighteenth century "was very much decayed."[17] It was in that declining clothing trade where James Habersham's father and uncles strove with some success for themselves but with little prospect of seeing their sons continuing the trade.

Sometime in the 1720s, with his health failing and his trade declining, James's father left the dye works and became an innkeeper, perhaps letting rooms in his house located on the busy Saturday Market. Beverley's many inns and hostels did a bustling business accommodating landholders from the surrounding countryside who came into town for commercial or civil transactions. In addition to trying to make a living, the widower had sole responsibility for raising five small children, all under the age of eight in 1723. Recognizing that Beverley offered limited opportunity for his oldest son, the elder James sought assistance in providing for the young boy's education and training. He found help in his own family. His brother Joseph was a prosperous grocer in London and agreed to oversee James's training. A grocer in eighteenth-century parlance was a wholesale merchant who bought and sold goods in the gross, or large quantities. Grocers traded in a wide range of provisions and merchandise, including such items as spices, dried fruits, and sugar, but not limited to foodstuffs. As a wholesaler, Joseph was well positioned to place James in apprenticeships that would

provide him with a sound preparation for the life of a merchant. He knew many merchants and processors who supplied him with goods, and he therefore could ask one or more of them to take James in as an apprentice for part of his training. As an adult in Georgia, James Habersham understood the importance of "connections" for one's success. In the eighteenth century, ability, industry, and favorable circumstances could get one just so far; one also needed influential contacts, which could provide access to those human and capital resources necessary in the mercantile world.

So James Habersham left Beverley. He rarely returned to the town, especially after his father's death in 1729. With hindsight, however, we can see the significance of his birthplace and the association of the marketplace, the church, and the Crown for his life's work. No one at the time of his birth could have foreseen how pervasive the market would be in James's life. Nor could anyone have envisioned that the Beverley where he would spend most of his life would not be the market town of Yorkshire, but a Georgia rice plantation he named after his town of birth. In leaving Beverley, he literally moved out into the world by going to London, an emporium for the whole world and the hub of a truly global economy. James Habersham left rather static circumstances of a small local community and joined a world in motion, first within England and then across the Atlantic.

Merchant Apprentice in London

Young James joined a great tide of lads moving from provincial towns and villages to London in the first half of the eighteenth century. Home to about 600,000 people, one in ten of all Englishmen, the metropolis attracted an estimated "8,000 youngsters a year [who] were arriving to seek their fortune." The agrarian writer Arthur Young wrote, "young men and women in the country fix their eye on London," drawn there by change and crisis in rural cottage industries. Writing of the influx in the early 1700s, one social historian depicts the immigration as youngsters being "sucked into London." In addition to people, provisions poured into the City on the Thames. Daniel Defoe said the whole kingdom worked to furnish something, "and I may add, the best of everything, to supply the city of London with provisions; I mean by provisions, corn, flesh, fish, butter, cheese, salt, fennel, timber, etc, and cloths also; with every thing necessary for building, and furniture for their own use, and for travel." London's voracious demand resulted in a "general dependence of the whole country upon the city of

London . . . for the consumption of its produce."[18] That demand also included the need for apprentices to work in the City's myriad workshops and countinghouses.

Although we have no record of Habersham's impressions of London upon his arrival, he would have no doubt been drawn to the bustling commercial activity that centered on the Thames. Writing in 1730, James Thomson captured in verse what must have been an awe-inspiring, and perhaps intimidating, sight for agrarian lads and lasses looking on the river scene for the first time:

> Then commerce brought into the public walk
> The busy merchant; the big warehouse built;
> Raised the strong crane, choked up the loaded street
> With foreign plenty; and thy stream, O Thames,
> Large, gentle, deep, majestic, king of floods!
> Chose for his grand resort. On either hand,
> Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts
> Shot up their spires.[19]

Ships entered the Thames from the English Channel and moved upriver to London, where they found mooring berths in one of three pools, the contemporary term used to describe still, deep spots on the river suitable for ships to drop anchor. The smallest vessels, primarily coasters, entered the Upper Pool, between London Bridge and Union Hole. "Middling vessels" occupied the Middle Pool farther downstream between Union Hole and Wapping New Stairs. And larger ships remained in the Lower Pool below Wapping New Stairs. The very largest ships, those of 450 to 500 tons, stayed downriver near its mouth by Woolwich, Blackwall, and Deptford. On one occasion, Defoe counted "as well as I could, *en passant,* and have found above two thousand sail of all sorts, not reckoning barges, lighters or pleasure-boats, and yachts; but of vessels that really go to sea." He wrote that the "Pool, seem'd, at that time, to be pretty full of ships." Merchandise from the vessels reached London's shores on the "legal quays" between London Bridge and the Tower, an area that formed a funnel through which all goods had to pass for customs inspection before being warehoused on nearby streets.[20]

The City of London's layout accommodated the multifarious activities required to receive imported commodities, convert them into processed or manufactured goods, and transship them to domestic markets or export

them to overseas ports. Thames-side trades included those that directly supported shipping: shipbuilding, rope making, sailmaking, and mast making, along with repair shops to keep the vessels operating. Moving up the hill from the river were the East End industries, which processed the raw materials arriving from all over the world, including sugar, grain, and dyes. Still farther removed from the river itself were those institutions whose paper transactions set in motion the flow of goods on the Thames: the Exchange where buyers and sellers from all over the world struck deals and contracted for goods, the Bank of England where merchants applied for bills of exchange that provided credit during the many months between selling goods and receiving payment, and insurance houses where shippers bought maritime policies that reduced the risks of overseas trade. Trade originated in those temples of commerce, mobilizing a host of middlemen: "Agents, Factors, Brokers, Insurers, Bankers, Negotiators, Discounters, Subscribers, Contractors, Remitters, Ticket-Mongers, Stock-Jobbers, and a great Variety of other Dealers in Money."[21] The wheels of trade began turning with the drafting of business documents such as bills of sale, which in turn set in motion the physical movement of goods. Carmen hauled freight down to and along the wharves. Porters were engaged in "Shipping, Landing, Loading, Housing, and Weighing" cargo. Watermen of various kinds conveyed goods and provisions from quays to ships.[22] It seemed as if all of the City of London turned to the task of making the metropolis the world's emporium. It was a world in which James Habersham would, in one way or another, spend the rest of his life.

The City of London was unrivaled as a school of commerce, offering a young man such as James the hands-on experience necessary for flourishing in the bustling global trade that the great metropolis served. Moreover, London afforded successful merchants social standing as well as material wealth: through trade they could buy their way into England's landed gentry. Indeed, writing while Habersham was in London, Daniel Defoe argued that cash was social as well as commercial capital, enabling tradesmen and merchants to acquire land and thus join the ranks of the gentry. He said that it was common in England for a merchant to amass, sometimes "from mere shopkeeping, . . . [a] ten to forty thousand pounds estate to divide among his family." On the contrary, he pointed out, "the gentry in England, from one end to the other . . . are in debt, and in necessitous circumstances, and a great many of greater estates also." Defoe invited readers of *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726) to look at the transition taking place within a

fifty-mile radius of London. He said that many of the "ancient families [were] worn out by time and family misfortunes, and the estates possessed by a new race of tradesmen, grown up into families of gentry, and established by the immense wealth gained" through trade.[23]

Defoe explained that English merchants also enjoyed a higher social standing than their counterparts in other European countries. He said that "trade is so far here from being inconsistent with a gentleman, that, in short, trade in England makes gentlemen, and has peopled this nation with gentlemen." He described the process: "after a generation or two, the tradesman's children, or at least their grandchildren, come to be as good gentlemen, statesmen, parliamentmen, privy counsellors, judges, bishops, and noblemen, as those of the highest birth and the most ancient families." Defoe could have been describing James Habersham's experience. Arriving in London as an apprentice, he acquired the knowledge and skills that helped him become colonial Savannah's most successful merchant. With profits from trade, he acquired thousands of acres and a couple hundred slaves, thus joining the squirearchy at the top of Georgia's political and social order. At his death, Habersham fit Defoe's description of the ascendant merchant who goes "off the stage" of life with an estate worth tens of thousands.[24]

But before Habersham could become a full participant in world trade, he faced a lengthy apprenticeship in order to learn his way around mercantile London. The merchants who supervised his apprenticeship subscribed to the notion of practical education, believing that the City of London offered more to prepare one for the world of commerce than did Oxford and Cambridge. Thomas Mortimer published a handbook for educating young aspiring merchants: *The Elements of Commerce, Politics and Finance . . . Designed as a Supplement to the Education of British Youth after they quit the public Universities or private Academies.* Like Defoe, Mortimer believed that a merchant's education started with sound moral training. He wrote that "the first care of parents and guardians, who design to bring up a youth to be a British merchant, should be, to instil into his tender mind the soundest principles of religion and morality, and a sacred veneration for truth." Exchange depended on trust and honesty, and one's reputation in the long haul was his greatest asset in the commercial world. After morality, a prospective merchant's education should turn toward the pragmatic, those subjects that he would use in trade. Mortimer believed that mastery of one's "native language" was indispensable. He had no use for the "dead languages" such as Latin. He thought it useful for merchants to learn everything they could

about their country's history, commodities, customs, taxes; in other words, anything bearing on commerce. Finally, formal training should include writing because commercial and financial documents were the lifeblood of world trade. Orders initiated the process. Bills of lading, insurance applications, customs receipts, bills of exchange, and letters to suppliers and customers all had to be executed in a neat, clear, accurate manner. Indeed, eighteenth-century merchants used the word *correspondent* to designate a trade partner, thus underscoring the importance of writing in conducting trade.[25] Mortimer believed that on-the-job training rounded out an aspiring merchant's education. He thought that after considerable time working in a countinghouse and, preferably, another two to three years abroad, one was able to succeed as a merchant.

Habersham's own education mirrored that advocated by Mortimer. With a limited formal education in Beverley, he required a long apprenticeship to acquire a competency. Although we have little firsthand evidence of Habersham's training in London, we gain considerable insight into what he considered valuable in education through his supervision of his own sons' schooling, especially that of his second son, Joseph. Habersham sent Joseph and James to Princeton for their formal education, but he was very critical of the outcome. Writing in 1768, he said he "truly lament[ed]" sending his sons northward. Of Joe, he wrote, "under the Idea of stuffing his Head with useless Criticisms on Phrases and Words in Latin and Greek, He was neither taught to write legibly nor with Propriety in the Language." Habersham undertook the task of helping his son make "some Progress in the knowledge of Accounts," but he sought a London merchant who would "admit him into your compting House." He hoped that such an experience would provide Joe an "opportunity of seeing something of real Business."[26]

Habersham doubted if Joe knew enough of the practical aspects of business to get along in London. For instance, he asked Georgia's London agent William Knox to assist Joe in dressing for success in the City. Habersham explained that the reason why Joe arrived in London without a wardrobe suitable for a merchant was that Savannah "is at present so very bare of Goods, that it does not afford a yard of woolen Cloth of any kind to make a suit of Cloths." He apologized for "sending my Child away in so shabby a Plight." Habersham expressed his belief that Joe had a sufficient supply of shirts but would need at least two suits immediately. He told Knox that Joe "has not been used to provide for himself at his own Discre-

tion yet," and requested his friend's assistance in judging "every thing He may want" to present himself well in mercantile circles.[27] Habersham's discussion of his son's attire reveals the importance he attached to self-fashioning in getting along in the world of trade.

In his first letter to his son after Joe's arrival in London, Habersham lectured on the virtues necessary for business success. After admonishing Joe to seek first the "welfare of your better part, your precious and immortal Soul," Habersham warned him against neglecting his "Worldly Employment." He wrote, "Every man ought to be industrious and diligent in that Station wherein Providence has placed him." Nothing was worse than idleness. Indeed, "an Idle man is the lumber of Creation and if it could be, I would almost say ought to be expelled [from] Society." Reminding his son of previous advice, Habersham continued, "you know I have often told you that the way to avoid being led into Temptation is always to be lawfully employed and I think it is an observation founded on Fact, that Industry and Sobriety are always attendants."[28]

Habersham warned Joe that although good associates were indispensable to a merchant's success, bad ones could lead to his downfall. Perhaps remembering his own experiences in London as a merchant apprentice, the elder Habersham tried to prepare his son for characters that preyed on the naive and gullible. "In all populous Places, and especially in London, where I resided several years," Habersham wrote, "you will daily see new objects and new Faces, and I know the People very prudently avoid making new Acquaintances, unless where their business is especially interested and indeed except in that Case." He explained, "the reason is, there are so many People who appear otherwise that what they really are, that to avoid being imposed upon, every wise and discreet Person will carefully shun making even any Approach to an Acquaintance, 'till the Person is well known." He added that "You will . . . find sharpers in every place of public Resort, and those of a lower Class at every Corner of a Street, who will endeavour to engage your attention in order to draw you into some Snare, by some specious Artifice, perhaps under the Disguise of kindness, Civility and I know not what." In a succinct conclusion, he admonished, "From such flee as for your life."[29]

In addition to sound moral judgment, a successful merchant must master the arts of writing proper business letters and maintaining accurate books. Habersham knew the importance of timely, accurate, complete correspondence in overseas trade. With the risks inherent in transatlantic

shipping, he realized that letters to suppliers and customers sometimes got lost. And he was aware that the sender and recipient of bills of lading, invoices, bills of exchange, and so on needed to refer by number or date to the identical documents in discussing them. He expressed himself on good letter writing in a letter to William Knox in 1771 when he vented his frustration over his friend's carelessness. "Be not offended when I plainly tell you," Habersham wrote, "that you fall short of being a punctual correspondent. I mean in your answers to my Letters, which are much in too general Terms, and I think you trust too much to your Memory, when you sit down to write." He offered Knox a solution: "My Method is immediately before I answer a letter, to look carefully over it, make some short Notes, namely of the date, perhaps how I receive it, and every material Part I may think necessary to reply to, if not Paragraph by Paragraph." Habersham contended that "for want of this, or some Methods, I have often been at a loss to know (unless from some general Remarks in your Letters) which of mine you had received, and being under that uncertainty, it has probably occasioned needless [repetitions] on my Part, which I have not leisure to attend to."[30]

Knox followed his friend's advice. Habersham noted in a letter dated November 26, 1771, that he had "received yr 3 letters No 1, 2, and 3 all dated the 4th September last." He added approvingly, "If you mean to Number yr Letters, I shall do the same, and it may save some trouble to acknowledge Receipts of Letters by Numbers instead of Dates."[31] Habersham was delighted that Knox had agreed to follow a system that would ensure both men that they were referring to the same information.

James Habersham's London experiences included firsthand knowledge about overseas trade and colonial commodities, knowledge that later would become indispensable to him as a colonial merchant. First, he gained an intimate knowledge of the work of a drysalter, a dealer in dry chemicals and dyes, who sold goods to dyers for curing leather and coloring textiles. He lived with a salter for a time, during one of the apprenticeships worked out by his uncle. No doubt James had some rudimentary understanding of drysalting through days spent at his father's dye works at Beverley and from listening to his father and uncles discuss their business. It is unclear whether Habersham worked under a drysalter or merely lived with one in London, but it is clear that he obtained at least enough knowledge of leather and dyes to make judgments about the quality of both. In a 1765 letter to an English merchant, Habersham explained that he did not include indigo in his most recent shipment because he had "not been able to procure any that I would

recommend." He told his correspondent that he had acquired his discerning eye for good indigo and fine deerskins not from Georgia, where both commodities abounded, but from London, where as a member of a salter's household he had examined dyes and leather for quality and value. He knew that tastes and demand change over time and noted that the market for leather had undergone a shift since he was an apprentice. "Our clear Creek Leather is now rather esteemed better, than Cherokee," he wrote, "and I am told is preferred in London, which I well know was not the Case Twenty years agoe."[32] And though he could not have known it at the time he resided in London, his eye for good leather and dyes would prove helpful to him as a Georgia merchant dealing in deerskins and indigo.

It was in sugar, another colonial commodity, that Habersham honed his skills as a merchant and manufacturer. For two years prior to leaving for Georgia, he was the general manager of two sugar refineries in London, which not only contributed to his knowledge of that important commodity but also familiarized him with the operations of converting colonial raw materials into manufactured products. He recalled in a 1771 letter to his London correspondents, John Graham and John Clark, that "in the year 1736 and 1737, I had the care of two refining Houses in Good-man-fields." Sugar refining, along with distilling and brewing, was one of the East End industries directly linked to the American trade. Located north-northeast of the Tower, Goodman's Field became closely identified with the sugar bakeries where West Indian raw sugar was processed into sugar loaves so popular in English homes of every social stratum. Indeed, the industry lent its name to an area of Goodman's Field known as Sugar Loaf Court. Most of the sugar reaching English refineries from the West Indies was Muscovado because the duty on raw sugar was far lower than that on refined sugar. Refiners then would begin processing by first boiling the Muscovado in large copper kettles to "cleanse the sugar." The sugar would undergo multiple "cookings" in order to clarify and purify it, with the most refined being processed the most number of times. After the desired number of boilings, the sugar cooled and was then ready for draining in order to get the driest possible granules. For curing or drying, the sugar was packed in earthenware pots, sealed at the top with an "exceptionally white, wet clay," and plugged at the bottom for forty-eight hours. The idea was for the moisture in the clay to pass through the sugar and draw off remaining impurities so that when the plug was removed, molasses would drain off. The resulting sugar loaves weighed about five pounds and were sold to grocers and

confectioners in that form, with the consumer breaking up the loaves as needed for cooking or table use.[33] Years later, as a Georgia merchant importing refined sugar from London, Habersham demonstrated his knowledge of sugar processing, warning his suppliers that "if the loaves are small, they will probably be hard and keep dry, and not, as the Grocers say, give or rather turn moist, by which there is often great waste on the arrival here."[34]

Running the sugar refineries in London was a significant responsibility. Habersham oversaw a heavy capital investment in the buildings and equipment for refining, draining, drying, and storing the sugar. He had to control expenses in order to deliver the processed sugar from his sugar bakeries to the London market at a competitive price. The sugar refining business during the eighteenth century consisted of scores and even hundreds of local refineries, all striving for market share. According to one estimate, London alone boasted of 180 refineries by the 1780s. The English of all classes developed prodigious appetites for sugar, finding uses in the preparation of foods and medicines. Unlike her sugar-importing rival, France, Great Britain retained most of the raw sugar arriving from the West Indies to be processed for home consumption, reexporting less than 20 percent to other European markets. France, on the other hand, reexported as much as 60 or 70 percent of its sugar. One study found that "England consumed from two to three times more sugar than France in the eighteenth century, and average per capita consumption favored the English by eight or even ten to one."[35]

While managing the refineries, Habersham could not have known that he would someday operate on the other end of the colonial-metropolitan trade network. But a decade later, he would be exporting rice and indigo and other colonial commodities to London for processing and sale to consumers. His experience at the sugar bakeries gave him an awareness of what English merchants expected from their colonial counterparts in terms of the quality of commodities shipped, the accuracy of weights and measurements, the condition of packaging, and the landed cost of the raw materials. Later, as an export merchant and then a planter in Georgia, he drew on his knowledge as an importer and processor, instructing his London correspondents on precisely how to prepare goods for shipment.

By 1736, James Habersham was a promising merchant on a trajectory that would enable him to accumulate sufficient funds to acquire land and take his place as a gentleman in English society. But he never became a member of England's landed gentry. Rather, in 1737 he left the land of his birth and embarked upon a larger world. As a freeborn Englishman, Habersham was

a citizen of England; now, and most notably for his future in America, he was well on his way toward becoming a "Citizen of the World," as London merchants operating abroad were known.[36] He was well prepared to make the greater Atlantic world his stage. At the sugar bakeries he purchased raw sugar produced in the West Indies by slaves brought from West Africa, and he shipped refined sugar to English, European, and American consumers. But in 1736, at the age of twenty-one, James Habersham's identity and fortunes took a dramatic change that would take him to Georgia in an unexpected role.

Convert to Methodism

Having spent most of his life preparing for a career in commerce, it is ironic that Habersham left London for America as a missionary, not a merchant. Sometime in the mid-1730s, he underwent a dramatic religious conversion and joined the Methodists, a group of evangelicals who constituted the New Dissenters within the Church of England. Led by John and Charles Wesley, the nascent movement had its origins at Oxford University, where a small band of students formed a society for deepening their personal faith and practicing piety within the community. Detractors ridiculed the students as fanatics who spent all of their time engaged in pious pursuits, a "methodical" round of prayer, devotion, Bible study, admonition, preaching, and charity. For their part, the students insisted that they remained loyal to the Anglican Church but were concerned that the church had ceased to practice its own beliefs with fervor. When the students graduated, they fanned out across the country and preached their message with zeal, introducing Methodist tenets to men and women all across Britain.

In 1735, Methodism made its international debut, and Georgia was the stage. On October 21, John Wesley sailed for Britain's newest North American colony, forever linking the Methodists and Georgia. Critics scorned Wesley's stated intentions for accepting his new post: to save his own soul and to impart the gospel to the natives. He defended his mission, explaining that he could "learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen" because they "have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world." Wesley thought that by working among Native Americans, he would be able to

examine and explain the pure, undistilled gospel without all the cant, partisanship, and hypocrisy that abounded in England and Europe. When asked why he wanted to go to America when "there are heathens enough in practice, if not theory, at home," he answered that unbelievers at home had plenty of people to preach to them, but that the Indians had none. Thus, when he arrived in Savannah on February 5, 1736, he hoped to be a Moses for the American heathens.[37]

George Whitefield was Habersham's Methodist link to Georgia. In 1736, Whitefield, one of Wesley's followers at Oxford, took a journey to the "Metropolis of England" where he was to officiate at the chapel of the Tower of London in the absence of Thomas Broughton, another Methodist Oxonian. During the next two months, the young minister gained widespread notoriety in London because of his youth and because of his powerful preaching style. Not only was the Tower chapel "crowded on Lord's Days," but soon people from all over town attended services there. Included were "several young men [who] came on Lord's Day morning, under serious impressions, to hear [Whitefield] discourse about the new birth, and the necessity of renouncing all in affection in order to follow Jesus Christ." At one of these services Habersham underwent a profound conversion experience that caused him to reverse his life's course by substituting the pursuit of piety for the quest for profits.[38]

Inspired by letters from John Wesley urging him to come to Georgia to preach the gospel, Whitefield in 1736 began expressing an interest in going to the new colony as a missionary. He wrote that Wesley's letters "fired my soul, and made me even long to go abroad for God too; but having no outward call, and being, as I then thought, too weak in body ever to undertake a voyage to sea, I endeavoured to lay aside all thoughts of going abroad." But the urge persisted. Whitefield avowed, "I felt at times such a strong attraction in my soul towards Georgia, that I thought it almost irresistible." But convinced that "labourers were wanted at home," Whitefield turned his energies toward preaching in Oxford and London. Indeed, he received an invitation to accept a "very profitable curacy in London," but he rejected it, explaining that he simply had no "inclination to accept it."[39]

Then, in December 1736, Whitefield got a clear "call" to ministry, one that would not only change his life but that of Habersham as well. He wrote in his diary that with "the thoughts of going to Georgia still crowded continually in upon me, . . . at length Providence seemed to point my way

thither." First, he received a letter from Charles Wesley, John's brother, who had recently returned from Georgia "to procure labourers." Then a letter from John in Savannah issued a compelling challenge to Whitefield with these words: "Only Mr. [Charles] Delamott is with me, till God shall stir up the hearts of some of His servants, who, putting their lives in His hands, shall come over and help us, where the harvest is so great, and the labourers so few. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield?" In a subsequent letter, Wesley spelled out what awaited God's servant in Georgia: "Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat, and raiment to put on; a house to lay your head in, such as your Lord had not; and a crown of glory that fadeth not away." With that, Whitefield said his "heart leaped within" him.[40]

When Habersham experienced the "new birth" in the 1730s, he took on all the zeal of a new convert and joined George Whitefield as a severe critic of the Church of England. They charged ministers of the established church with failing to preach the gospel, especially the core Protestant tenet of salvation by faith alone. They thought that the church had divorced itself from the daily experiences of its parishioners and emphasized form and ritual over the central teaching that God alone saved wayward men and women through divine grace. Habersham became convinced that Whitefield's "brand" of religion was the only hope for the world. Accordingly, he gave up what was surely a lucrative career as a merchant and joined Whitefield as a crusader for practical piety.

Whitefield and Habersham tarred all Anglican ministers with the same brush, which was unfair to the many faithful clergymen who promoted an aggressive evangelical missionary program in British North America, including Georgia. In 1739, one year after Habersham arrived in Savannah, the lord bishop of Bristol delivered the annual sermon before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). For his text, he selected the passage from Matthew 24.14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." Like Whitefield, the bishop claimed that human reason was insufficient in promoting "real Piety." He argued that "Natural Religion became gradually more and more darkened with Superstition," and that human beings could not rely on themselves for their salvation. He called for the "Revival" of true religion. In that revival, the "Light of Reason" must be replaced by "the grace of God." The church should be nothing less than "the Kingdom of God come nigh unto people." Finally, the church must send missionaries to

preach the gospel in "remote places" to all people. He specifically included slaves, who he maintained were "not merely . . . Cattle or Goods" but persons with souls filled with religious sensibilities.[41]

At the SPG's annual sermon the following year, the lord bishop of Gloucester, who, incidentally, had ordained Whitefield, found himself in the position of defending the corporation's missionaries against attacks from people such as Whitefield and Habersham. In entries in his *Journals* covering 1739, Whitefield had commented on the missionaries the SPG had sent to the Carolinas. "I should rather that people had no minister than such as are generally sent over," he wrote.[42] The bishop of Gloucester objected to charges that the SPG sent out "vicious and unqualified Men." He implored the society's leadership to make certain that the missionaries they appoint "never teach any Thing for Christianity, but what Christ and his Apostles have taught us."[43] The SPG anniversary sermons of 1739 and 1740 indicate that the gap between what was being taught by the church and what Whitefield preached was not as great in all instances as the enthusiastic evangelist represented. Nonetheless, his new convert and disciple James Habersham believed that the Methodists were, like the sixteenth-century Protestants, sole bearers of the true gospel of Christ.

The world to which Habersham and Whitefield would take the gospel was the brainchild of a group of British philanthropists. While Habersham was preparing himself for the world of trade, he had no idea that a group of men in London were conceiving of a new project that would alter the course of his life. In 1732, twenty gentlemen constituted as the Trustees of the Colony of Georgia petitioned and received from George II a charter for a new colony between South Carolina and Spanish Florida. Their motives were mixed. First, the settlement would relieve England of many of the poor and burdensome unemployed and underemployed. Those who were "through misfortunes and want of employment, reduced to great necessity" would be able with assistance to remove to Georgia "where, by cultivating the lands at present waste and desolate, they might . . . gain a comfortable subsistence for themselves and their families." Second, the new colony would make an important contribution to Britain's mercantilist competition with rival European powers. It would provide raw materials and markets that would "increase the trade, navigation and wealth of these our realms." Third, Georgia had an important military role. As a buffer colony, it would protect South Carolina and the other mainland colonies by settling the southern frontier and, thereby, reducing the threat from the "neighbouring sav-

ages." Fourth, Georgia had a charitable dimension. The trustees would accept contributions from English donors to pay the passage of "the meanest and most infatuate" and thus "relieve the wants of . . . poor subjects."[44]

Three years later and two years before Habersham sailed for Georgia, the trustees, who held full governing powers over the colony for twenty-one years, enacted two measures that would have great importance for him as well as other settlers. First, citing military reasons, the trustees forbade the possession and use of slaves in Georgia. They pointed out that the Spanish had tried to lure South Carolina slaves by promising freedom to all who would flee their masters and come to Florida. In time of war, white manpower available to fight the Spanish would be severely restricted because of the necessity of holding some men in reserve to guard the slaves. Moreover, the fear of slave insurrection in peacetime necessitated constant vigilance among whites. Thus, the trustees determined, Georgians would work their own lands, assisted only by white servants. Second, the trustees imposed restrictions on landholding. No person could receive a grant exceeding five hundred acres, and any portion granted but not cultivated within eighteen years must be surrendered to the trustees. Moreover, if the grantee died without a male heir, the land would revert to the trustees. Again, the rationale rested on security concerns. By restricting the size of plantations, the trustees hoped to prevent the kind of engrossment that had occurred in the Carolinas and the Chesapeake, where some landholders held thousands and even tens of thousands of acres. With smaller farms, the trustees hoped to attract many more settlers who would constitute the military manpower needed to secure Georgia's borders. Likewise, land held in tail male guaranteed that land ownership would remain in the hands of men, further ensuring a plentiful supply of militiamen.[45]

The Georgia trustees publicized their new colony widely between 1732 and Habersham's departure in late 1737. Anyone interested had no shortage of opportunities to read about Britain's latest North American colony, including an account of "the designs of the trustees for establishing" the province, an account of "all monies and effects received and expended," "reasons for establishing the Colony of Georgia, with regard to the trade of Great Britain," a "new and accurate account of the provinces of South Carolina and Georgia," a "new Voyage to Georgia," and a poem "on Mr. Oglethorpe's second voyage to Georgia."[46] In addition to pamphlets, a stream of newspaper articles publicized Georgia's unique place among American colonies.

The poet extolling the land settled by James Oglethorpe developed two themes in hyperbolic verse. Aimed at potential settlers, the first was that of opportunity in a fertile paradise:

> See where beyond the spacious Ocean lies
> A wide waste Land beneath the Southern Skies;
> Where kindly Suns for Ages roll'd in vain,
> Nor e'er the Vintage saw, or rip'ning Grain,
> Where all Things into wild Luxuriance ran,
> And burthen'd Nature ask'd the Aid of Man.
> In this sweet Climate and prolifick Soil,
> He bids the eager Swain indulge his Toil;
> In free Possession to the Planter's Hand,
> Consigns the rich uncultivated Land.
> Go you, the Monarch cries, go settle there,
> Whom Britain from her Plenitude can spare:
> Go, your old wonted Industry pursue;
> Nor envy Spain the Treasures of Peru.[47]

The second theme addressed the mercantilist justification for settling Georgia. Not only would the new colonists settle on land of their own and enjoy the fruits of their labor, but they would end England's necessity of importing such commodities as wine and raw silk:

> With nobler Products see thy GEORGIA teems,
> Chear'd with the genial Sun's director Beams;
> There the wild Vine to Culture learns to yield,
> And purple Clusters ripen through the Field.
> Now bid thy Merchants bring thy Wine no more
> Or from the Iberian or the Tuscan Shore;
> No more they need th' Hungarian Vineyards drain,
> And France herself may drink her best Champain.
> Behold! at last, and in a subject Land,
> Nectar sufficient for thy large Demand:
> Delicious Nectar, powerful to improve
> Our hospitable Mirth and social Love:
> This for thy jovial Sons.—Nor less the Care
> Of thy young Province, to oblige the FAIR;
> Here tend the Silk Worm in the verdant Shade,
> The frugal Matron and the blooming Maid.[48]

Later, when disgruntled settlers cited the poem as an example of how the trustees enticed men and women to leave England for Georgia through false advertisement, one of the trustees reminded them that poetry must not be taken literally. The Earl of Egmont lectured discontented inhabitants that poets used all kinds of tropes to evoke powerful images, and that readers surely knew that figures of speech, including hyperbole, must be expected and interpreted. In response to the college-educated Hugh Anderson, who claimed the poem in question was misleading, Egmont replied, "One would expect the Hyperboles of Poetry Should not have influenced so wise an Author as Mr. Anderson to quit his native Country. The meanest School boy makes due allowance for such flights."[49]

If Habersham read the publicity, the young merchant would have been heartened no doubt by the colony's bright economic prospects. As superintendent of the sugar bakeries, he knew the importance of colonial commodities to London manufacturing. The Georgia trustees emphasized that their new colony was ideally suited for the production of such commodities as raw silk. They were confident that Georgia silk would not only satisfy Great Britain's demand but would "extend to a foreign exportation, because raw silk may be raised much cheaper in Georgia, where land is to be had on easy terms, and mulberry trees abound, than in Italy where both are very dear." Moreover, the production of wine, indigo, olives, drugs, and flax would provide "great benefits" to English trade.[50] As a Methodist, Habersham would have been particularly interested in silk production because Methodism had been well received among the Huguenot silk weavers of Spitalfields, the silk-weaving center of London.

The trustees envisioned silk as Georgia's contribution to Britain's wealth. One promotional piece predicted that England would be Georgia's market for "great quantities of raw silk." Other commodities would also flow into the mother country: wine, oil, cotton, drugs, and dyeing stuffs. But silk promised the greatest return. Moreover, its production would provide employment for numerous settlers who would thereby have the means to purchase British manufactures. "The raw silk, which Great Britain and Ireland are able to consume," the promoter wrote, "will employ forty or fifty thousand persons in that country [Georgia], nor need they be the strongest, or most industrious part of mankind." In other words, England could rid itself of many unemployed and undesirables who could contribute to the empire's wealth.[51]

By removing a portion of the working poor, Georgia would contribute to England's wealth. The writer of the promotional brochure drew up a pro

forma statement illustrating the financial impact of removing one hundred poor families to Georgia. In London, those families collectively would earn 1,000 pounds sterling per year, but they would consume 2,000, a shortfall of 1,000 pounds in supporting themselves. That meant that half of the funds for their support was supplied by the "wealth of others." In Georgia, those families would earn 6,000 pounds. They would also consume 6,000 pounds: 2,000 of their own produce and 4,000 of "English Produce." In comparison, then, England's "Rich and Industrious" would profit to the value of 5,000 pounds per annum: saving 1,000 pounds in poor relief and gaining 4,000 on the sale of English goods.[52] On paper at least, Georgia would contribute mightily to the empire's wealth.

Habersham was no doubt equally pleased to read about the trustees' measures to promote religion in the new colony. In pamphlets and newspaper articles, the trustees stressed that the spiritual well-being of Georgia settlers was a priority. As early as 1733, the *Weekly Miscellany* noted that a church was to be built in Savannah and a clergyman sent over "on the foot of an annual salary, to reside as the first minister" there. The editorial added with approval, "These early expressions of zeal in the trustees, give us just ground to hope that a better face of religion will be preserved in Georgia, than appears in many of our American settlements."[53] As Habersham became interested in the pious Methodists, he must have delighted in learning that the first minister to Savannah was a fellow believer, John Wesley.

When Wesley asked Whitefield in 1736 to come assist him in Georgia, he initiated a chain of events that would dramatically alter the course of James Habersham's life. As Whitefield began considering going to Georgia to engage in the Lord's work there, he thought about the need for an assistant. Wesley had Charles Delamotte to act as schoolmaster; Whitefield would also need an able person to help him in his missionary work. Exactly when Whitefield identified Habersham as the person he needed is unclear. What is clear is that Habersham was becoming an important aide to Whitefield as he preached in London. It was Habersham who importuned the evangelist to exploit his widening reputation after London newspapers began publicizing his activities. Following Habersham's urging, Whitefield preached a charity sermon at St. Swithin's, and the performance was a huge success, with a crowded audience and record-breaking contributions. Just as important was the publicity following the service. The *Daily Advertiser* announced "that there was a young gentleman going volunteer to Georgia; that he had preached at St. Swithin's, and collected £8 instead of

ten shillings . . . ; and that he was to preach next Wednesday before the Societies, at their general quarterly meeting." Although Whitefield said he was "chagrined" to see his name in the public papers, he soon recognized the value of publicity and advertisement. After the article appeared, he was inundated with invitations to preach charity sermons all over London.[54] And he and Habersham made certain that those occasions were well advertised in order to attract large crowds. Habersham was Whitefield's constant companion and adviser in London, and the evangelist thought his lay ally indispensable for his mission to Georgia.

When Habersham decided to turn his back on the life of a London merchant for that of a Georgia missionary, he adopted a new formula for success that calculated gain in spiritual, not material, terms. He knew what awaited him and recognized that his new life would be far more difficult than what he was accustomed to. Wesley had warned that none should come to Georgia unless they were willing to accept the prevailing conditions: "without any temporal wages other than food and raiment, the plain conveniences of life."[55] Rather than dissuading Habersham, the idea of sacrificing worldly ease for spreading the gospel fired his evangelical zeal.

But how did Habersham measure up against the ideal Georgia settler? One author of a promotional pamphlet identified two categories of English men and women who should not immigrate to the new colony. Some people who could "make life tolerable" in Georgia but are "willing to stay at Home" should remain in England, where they will be more useful to the kingdom. What the writer meant was that many people possessed the talents and means to contribute to the settlement, but if they lacked the motivation or will to undertake the venture, they would be better off staying in England. Another group that should stay at home are those "who are oppres'd by Poverty and Misfortunes [and] are unable to be at the Charges of removing from their Miseries."[56] These poor souls were making no contribution to England, and it was reasonable to assume that they would make little in a new land.

Ideal settlers, on the other hand, would include those from "reputable Families" and of "liberal, or at least, easy Education." They would be people of ability with demonstrable skills. Examples of candidates include "some undone by Guardians, some by Law-Suits, some by Accidents in Commerce, some by Stocks and Bubbles, and some by Suretyship." In other words, these persons had proven themselves in useful endeavors but had experienced setbacks. What they needed was an opportunity for a new

beginning, and these people, the writer claimed, may "relieve themselves and strengthen Georgia." To sum up, the pamphleteer expressed his belief that immigrants to Georgia ought to consist of "the better Sort of the Indigent."[57] That is, though poor, they had talents that could be put to advantage in America.

Measured against that profile, James Habersham was an ideal candidate for Georgia. He had some "liberal" education, evidenced by his ability to teach Latin. In addition, he had been "undone" by family misfortune, specifically, his mother's death. Yet he had proven his managerial abilities in positions of great responsibility. His lack of money and social standing was voluntary, brought about by his renouncing a promising future as a merchant to assist Whitefield in his evangelistic work. Finally, he wanted to go to Georgia. Certainly his contributions to colonial Georgia would bear out the fact that he was ideally suited for life in a frontier colony.

Thus, having first arrived from Beverley as a merchant apprentice, James Habersham departed London for Georgia as a schoolmaster and missionary. On December 28, 1737, as he boarded the *Whitaker* in the Thames, he did not know that he would never again see the metropolis or, for that matter, England. Nor could he foresee the challenges that awaited him in Georgia. But armed with an unyielding faith in God and equipped with a sound understanding of the Atlantic market, he sailed to a new world that would soon put both to the test.

CHAPTER TWO

Bethesda

Orphan House Superintendent

On Friday, December 30, 1737, James Habersham boarded the *Whitaker,* bound for Georgia, and embarked on more than an ocean voyage; the course of his life was about to take a radical turn. At twenty-two, he was turning his back on a promising mercantile career, launching instead into the unknown, sailing for a remote colony bordering lands contested by Spanish, French, and Indian forces. And he was making a career change that, a few years earlier, he would have found unthinkable. Following George Whitefield's wishes, Habersham decided to become a missionary and schoolmaster in Georgia as part of the evangelist's plan to establish an orphanage. A year after assuming his new post, Habersham reflected, "When I was in England, my proud heart abhorred the idea of keeping a school, and I have sometimes tho't that I would rather choose to take up with the most mean and servile employment than a schoolmaster's." As he departed England he knew that he would have difficulty explaining the "great change" he was undertaking to his family and friends and, perhaps, to himself.[1]

Within weeks of his arrival, Habersham discovered in a very personal way how forbidding the Georgia wilderness could be. His younger brother Joseph, who had accompanied him to Savannah, wandered into the dense swampland south of the settlement and became lost. Whitefield described the moment in his journal for August 12: "This afternoon, was alarmed with the news of a family disaster. My dear friend H's brother going to find a horse that was lost in the woods, got lost himself, and many guns shot after him for several days, but in vain."[2] Though a search party found Joseph a few days later, the celebration of his rescue was short lived. Within a year he died, probably succumbing to malaria or smallpox. Georgia had abundant resources that settlers would eventually exploit, but nature protected her bounty behind a formidable barrier of wilderness and disease.

Habersham soon found himself alone. Whitefield decided that he must

return immediately to London to seek ordination in order to become the parish priest in Savannah. Although Whitefield was suitable as Wesley's assistant, his current status as deacon was inadequate now that he was to be the town's minister. Moreover, he wanted to raise funds to build a new orphanage for the many children whose parents had not survived the "seasoning" period of Georgia's early settlement. Left behind, Habersham was ill equipped for the challenges he faced. His London apprenticeship and business experience had given him knowledge and skills suitable for a commission merchant, but as superintendent of temporal affairs at the orphanage, James Habersham became a planter with a daunting mission: converting five hundred acres of uncleared land into a profitable farm that would yield enough provisions for the orphans and a surplus to exchange in the market for necessities that could not be raised.

House of Mercy

Shortly after Whitefield's departure in 1738, Habersham embroiled himself in a controversy that brought him into disfavor with the local magistrates and no doubt caused the trustees to question their decision to pay his passage. Although his religious zeal played a large part in the matter, his circumstances also contributed: he was serving two masters. First, he worked for the trustees, who had sent him to Georgia to become the new schoolmaster. As an incentive to recruit him, the trustees had arranged for Habersham to dine at the captain's table on the transatlantic voyage and had supplied him with provisions for a year from the trust's store.[3] Georgia president William Stephens was pleased with Habersham's performance. "Mr. Habersham's care of the school," he reported to the trustees, "is unexceptionable; and I look on him as a diligent and useful Man in divers capacity's."[4] But Habersham had a second and more compelling loyalty. As a devoted follower of George Whitefield, he came to Georgia as a missionary to spread the gospel as preached by the Methodist evangelist.

On departing for England, Whitefield instructed Habersham to carry on in his place by proclaiming the "one thing needful": the "new birth." The trustees, however, thought otherwise, believing it necessary for an ordained minister to preside over religious services. Accordingly, they sent a young minister, William Norris, to Savannah. When he attempted to assume his duties, however, Norris discovered that the pulpit in Savannah was closed

to him because Whitefield had "substituted Mr. Habersham in the Ministerial Office."[5]

Moreover, Habersham accused Norris of teaching a false doctrine, one that did not accord with the "true" gospel. Appealing to the trustees, Norris claimed Habersham had "employed all his Authority and Credit to the Prejudice of my Ministry and private Caracter." He thought Habersham was driven by "blind zeal."[6] Stephens became concerned that Habersham was splitting the colony along religious lines, charging him with being part of a "Fraternity . . . [that] seem to speak and think lightly of the Generality of the Clergy and the Church of England, and condemn them for Indolence." He said that Habersham and his fellow Methodists professed "in all Conversation that they were formed into a Society . . . whom nothing in this World could separate; and whatever One of 'em said tother would maintain." Therefore, he concluded, Norris could "expect no Quarter from them."[7] As chief magistrate, Stephens took seriously any threat to social peace and good order, and that is precisely what Habersham represented. Moreover, Georgia had been founded as a haven for Europeans suffering under religious persecution, and the trustees hoped that a climate of toleration would attract settlers. Clearly, Habersham's intolerance of opposing theological views ran counter to the founders' liberal intentions.

Fortunately for Stephens, the problem solved itself when Habersham's attention shifted to his primary objective of establishing an orphanage, a mission that became all consuming. The idea for an orphanage originated with James Oglethorpe and Charles Wesley, the Methodist minister who had accompanied his brother John to Savannah in the mid-1730s. Whitefield adopted the plan and pledged to carry it to fruition, thinking it a natural idea for the trustees to "erect a House for fatherless Children" in a "Province for the Refuge and Support of many of our poor Countrymen." In addition, he thought the charity would provide "some Inducement with many to come over" to Georgia. What Habersham and Whitefield saw on first arriving underscored the need for the orphanage. They found that "for want of a House to breed them up in, the poor little Ones were tabled out here and there, and besides the Hurt they received by bad Examples, [they forgot] at home what they learnt at School." Whitefield decided to obligate himself "to receive from Time to Time as many Orphans as the Land and Stock would maintain."[8] Such an undertaking would cost money, but having been enormously successful in raising funds for English charity schools,

Whitefield was confident he could secure start-up capital. He would return to England and solicit money from "those who are rich in this world's goods."[9]

Typical of the orphans who would find refuge at Bethesda were Peter and Charles Tondee. The brothers were aged ten and five, respectively, when they emigrated from London with their father in 1733. Just two months after they arrived, the boys' father died, leaving them orphans, "along with many other children whose parents died during that first summer." For the next seven years, the brothers, now wards of the trustees, bounced around from one foster home to the next. First, they lived with Paul Amatis, the Italian whom the trustees had hired to oversee silk production. Then they lived with Henry Parker, one of Georgia's magistrates, and worked on his plantation located at the Isle of Hope. Then, when Peter was sixteen and Charles eleven, the Tondee brothers joined the first group that Whitefield took in at Bethesda. There, as they had in their previous homes, the boys worked. Labor was scarce, and Habersham expected all children to work. Although he wished to take advantage of their labor, Habersham also viewed the orphans' stay as an apprenticeship wherein they learned a useful craft. For example, Peter became a carpenter's assistant, acquiring skills that equipped him for a life as a carpenter.[10]

For Habersham, establishing the orphanage was a spiritual quest. He took seriously the Calvinist view of humanity: people were corrupt and, in the eyes of a perfect and sovereign God, comparable to worms. Only the grace of God could save individuals from their much deserved eternal damnation. In response to a Charlestown woman who had expressed her admiration for his work with the orphans, Habersham demurred, "You as well as many others think too highly of me; Could you see the workings of my Heart and could you but see how little I do to please God, and how much to please myself. Could you but see my soul in its truest colours, as it is *really* without Disguise. You would then see it; a sink of Corruption, full of disorder'd passion, self will and self love." He explained that even his acts of benevolence could not be attributed to him: "the very few good actions which I do, if any, have God for their Author, but the many ills which I daily commit are the product of my own bad heart." Having painted his soul in the darkest hues, Habersham switched to the brightest tones as he limned the emanation of divine, salvific light. He informed his correspondent, Madame Leflore, that he was shifting his focus to "the more happy part of Man, I mean the Means of his recovery from this sinful State." He

exulted in the belief that God had come down from heaven and died for the elect "to save us from the powers of Sin."[11]

Habersham recognized that persons who had not experienced the "new birth" would have difficulty understanding why he had left the security and promise of London's commercial world for the uncertainty and hopelessness of struggling Georgia. To his brother-in-law, Christopher Bagwith of Whitby, Yorkshire, he wrote in January 1739: "you may perhaps blame me for this adventure and wonder at my folly in leaving England where I was so well and genteely provided for. I will not pretend to give you any reasons to justify my conduct in this great change because I believe as they did not proceed from any outward cause but were entirely and only known to God and my own soul, will not, nay cannot, give you that satisfaction and appear in that light they did to me." He knew that in the calculus of trade, his rationale for making "this great change" made no sense. He acknowledged that his motivation was folly in terms of increasing his net worth. Habersham explained that "the advantages I proposed to myself were not of this world, for I was told when I left England that if I went to Georgia I must renounce all and trust only in god and follow Christ through many tribulations and trials; though I thank God I have found it otherwise, I have enough and to spare of this world's goods."[12] Six months later, he was still struggling to explain his decision. In a letter to his uncle in London, Habersham defended his decision in terms similar to those expressed to Bagwith, though suffused with Calvinist self-flagellation. To the man who had arranged his apprenticeships and supervised his education, he apologized in anguish for what he feared was an act of disloyalty and ingratitude: "Alas, I now cease to wonder, that I was ungrateful to you."[13]

Before they had sufficient means to build an orphanage, Whitefield and Habersham rented quarters in Savannah. They leased a house from David Douglas, a residence Whitefield described as "the largest in Savannah," for thirty-five pounds a year.[14] And they secured the use of a parsonage owned by German Pietists who were among the early immigrants to Georgia and another home to house as many as sixty or seventy orphans and school children.[15] There Habersham conducted a school teaching such basic skills as reading, writing, and arithmetic. His idea of a proper education for poor children was shaped by his own education in London: practical knowledge essential for clerks and tradesmen. Later, when he oversaw his own sons' education, Habersham continued to value practical subjects over those such as foreign languages and literature, which he considered to be of little use

for getting along in the world. In addition, his Savannah school emphasized moral training. Both from his apprenticeship and his religious convictions, Habersham believed that good character made a young boy or girl a valuable employee.

Whitefield and Habersham wished to find a permanent home for the orphanage, preferably a site outside Savannah. Whitefield explained, "I choose to have it so far off the town, because the children will be more free from bad examples, and can more conveniently go up on the land to work." With that goal in mind, Habersham undertook in Whitefield's absence the responsibility of finding a suitable plot. The trustees had granted five hundred acres to Whitefield for the charity, and Habersham wanted to find land with good access to Savannah's markets yet remote enough to shield the children from evil influences. He found a spot "situated on the northern part of the colony, about ten miles from Savannah."[16] But, alas, he also found more controversy. Although the trustees had granted Whitefield five hundred acres, the magistrates assumed that Habersham would follow their procedures and make formal application to them for a survey and title to the land. Instead, he bypassed the magistrates and applied to Oglethorpe to acquire the land. The general "approved of the Place he had made Choice of, ordered it to be run out [i.e., surveyed], and then signed a Warrant" granting possession to Habersham.[17] Habersham's action was predicated on two basic assumptions. First, he assumed that Oglethorpe, as a trustee and commander of the regiment, had the authority to make land grants. And second, Habersham preferred doing business with Oglethorpe rather than with William Stephens because of what he perceived as Stephens's anti-Methodist bias. Habersham further assumed that he acted as Whitefield's agent and that the deed to the property, though showing Habersham as owner, could later be amended to show Whitefield as titleholder.

When Whitefield returned to Georgia in early 1740, he visited the site Habersham had selected and pronounced himself very pleased with the acreage. Afterward he told Stephens that "he was so well satisfied with the Situation of the five hundred Acres . . . that he would lay aside all farther Thoughts where to build his Orphan-House, being determined to fix it on that Land." Whitefield added that he proposed to build immediately "a Chapel (or Oratory) and also an Apartment for himself, intending to make it pretty much the Place of his Residence, when in these Parts." When the minister then requested that the deed be transferred to his name, Stephens demurred. He resented Habersham's circumvention of his authority by

applying for the grant from Oglethorpe, who issued it in Habersham's name. Stephens flatly refused to put the land in the evangelist's name, and when Whitefield protested, Stephens rebutted that it was Habersham's "precipitate Measures" that had resulted in the title dispute. Then, after two weeks of thwarting Whitefield's repeated requests for transferring the title, Stephens agreed only if Habersham would surrender the tract and thereby resign all rights and claims to the property. Habersham accepted the terms, and the transfer was made, but in a form that Habersham, not Stephens, selected. At the orphanage site, with Stephens, Whitefield, and Habersham present, the latter delivered to Whitefield "a small Shrub, which he plucked up, and therewith declaring, that he surrendered all his Right, &c." Stephens noted that he knew that such a gesture "could not be deemed taking a legal Possession, forasmuch as no Surrender of any Lands . . . can be made to another Person, without being authorized by the Trust."[18] But he was tired of battling Whitefield and Habersham and allowed the symbolic transfer to suffice, knowing that the trustees would accede to Whitefield's desires.

Two months later, on March 25, Whitefield returned to the site and laid the first brick on the "great house which he called BETHESDA, i.e. *a house of mercy.*" Bethesda was modeled after the Pietist orphanage at Halle, Germany, and the Moravian orphan house in nearby Ebenezer, Georgia, and its primary purpose was to rescue orphans and children of the poor from lives of neglect and drudgery, provide them with a rudimentary education and practical training in a trade, and encourage them to lives of practical piety. By early 1740, Habersham had about twenty orphans in residence. Three were Germans whom Whitefield called the "most pitiful objects, I think, I ever saw." He claimed, "no new negroes could look more despicable, or require more pains to instruct them. They have been used to exceedingly hard labour, and though supplied with provisions from the trustees, were treated in a manner unbecoming even heathens." He characterized his bringing in the children as freeing them from slavery. Whitefield also observed that the other orphans had received no religious instruction and would be as "ignorant of God and Christ as the Indians" if they had not found a haven at Bethesda.[19]

Besides freeing orphans from bondage, Whitefield and Habersham hoped that the orphanage would be an instrument for saving souls. When he named the orphanage Bethesda, Whitefield expressed his desire that "many acts of mercy will be shewn there, and that many will thereby be

stirred up to praise the Lord, as a God Whose mercy endureth for ever." In other words, he viewed the charity as an evangelical message, a beacon in the Georgia wilderness proclaiming God's goodness to all. Whitefield made sure that people throughout Britain and America knew about Bethesda, and his success can be measured in part by the nearly fifteen thousand pounds sterling that he raised for its upkeep, much of it in small donations given by thousands of men and women. Jonathan Edwards, pastor at Northampton, Massachusetts, and a leader of the evangelical revival known as the Great Awakening, attributed much of Whitefield's success in attracting large audiences to Bethesda's widespread appeal. Edwards believed that "the remarkable blessing that God has given to Mr. Whitefield, may well be thought to be very much owing to his laying out himself so abundantly in charitable designs."[20]

The daily routine at Bethesda reflected its founder's belief that order and discipline and method promoted piety and morality. And the instruction, as some of Whitefield's opponents charged, was aimed at raising good Methodists as well as providing the rudiments of education for orphans, the majority of whom would likely be put out as apprentices to learn a trade. Whitefield described daily life at the orphanage:

> The bell rings in the morn, at sun-rise, to wake the family. When the children arise, they sing a short hymn, and pray by themselves: then they go down and wash; and by the time they have done that, the bell calls to public worship, when a portion of scripture is read and expounded, a psalm sung, and the exercise begun and ended with prayer. Then they breakfast, and afterwards go some to their trades, and the rest to their prayers and schools. At noon, they all dine in the same room, and have a comfortable and wholesome diet provided. A hymn is sung before and after dinner: then in about half an hour, to school again; and between whiles find time enough for recreation. A little after sun-set the bell calls to public duty again, which is performed in the same manner as in the morning. After that they sup, and are attended to bed by one of their masters, who then pray with them, as they often do privately.[21]

Although Whitefield had appointed Habersham superintendent of temporal affairs at Bethesda, the former merchant always considered his to be a spiritual mission. In his letters to Whitefield after the evangelist had returned to London in January 1741, Habersham gave precedence to news concerning the orphans' religious experiences. And in one of his last reports written in 1744 and published in London that same year, Habersham began

with an extensive report from Jonathan Barber, superintendent of spiritual affairs. He quoted from Barber's account of a revival at Bethesda the previous year when the spiritual "Spark broke out into a Flame [and] many Souls were fill'd with the Love of God and prais'd our dear Redeemer." Of the revival among the children, Habersham added, "I believe I may safely say, there was scarce one child of God, but what was reviv'd." Then he concluded with a summary that presented the net results in language similar to that found in reports between correspondents in transatlantic trade: "I think we have Reason to believe that *twenty three Souls have been converted in the Orphan-House since you last left us,* besides some of our Dutch neighbors, and other transient victories."[22] To Habersham, the conversions represented the kinds of spiritual "dividends" he had hoped for when he left his uncle's countinghouse.

In addition to its primary charitable and religious mission, Bethesda served an important economic role in northern Georgia. When Whitefield returned to Georgia in early 1740, he brought with him more than a thousand pounds sterling that he had raised in England for building the orphanage. Such a sum, and subsequent donations from the evangelist's many fund-raising trips, represented a much-needed infusion of capital into the poor colony. Georgia had declined to "a melancholy thing" and was "almost deserted by all but such as could not well go away." Rather than discouraging Whitefield and Habersham, the colony's dismal state offered new opportunity. Building the orphan house would provide employment for many, and they hoped that their investment there would be a means of keeping settlers in the colony. Thus, they tied together the future of Bethesda and that of Georgia, a connection each would refer to repeatedly in negotiations with the trustees for additional land and later for the introduction of slaves.

Bethesda afforded Habersham more than a spiritual calling and an economic challenge; it also provided him with a wife. In May 1740, Whitefield had brought to the orphan house "two little girls, whose father [Robert Bolton] kept a dancing-school, assembly and concert room in Philadelphia." In a much publicized action, Whitefield's traveling companion and publicist William Seward brazenly nailed shut the doors to the concert room and defended his actions by proclaiming that former patrons to balls and assemblies had renounced such "sinful" diversions as a result of Whitefield's preaching. As proprietor, Bolton was furious and accused Seward and Whitefield of manufacturing the incident as a scheme of shameless self-promotion.[23] Bolton's wife had a higher opinion of the

evangelist. Whitefield explained that Ann Bolton "had a work of grace in her heart, was well-bred, and much concerned, for some time, at the business in which her husband was engaged." As he left Philadelphia for Savannah, Whitefield took with him the two Bolton daughters, whose mother wished them to be educated in an evangelical school.

Just before his second return to England, Whitefield married Habersham and Mary Bolton, one of the two Philadelphia girls. At the wedding ceremony conducted at Bethesda on Saturday, December 27, 1740, Whitefield declared "the Bridegroom of the Church was present" at the service and expressed his hope that the couple "felt a union between Jesus Christ and their souls."[24] Nine years separated the twenty-five-year-old groom and the sixteen-year-old bride. Habersham justified his marrying a much younger person, asserting that her age was "no objection with me as I well knew her pious prudent behavior exceeded those of twice her years." He was much more concerned about spiritual maturity than chronological age. He expressed his love for Mary in the letter he sent her parents: "I bless God from my heart for bringing us together. My love to her increases daily, and the more I know her the more I love her and the more reason I have to be thankful."[25] He voiced similar sentiments when Mary died in 1763, after twenty-two years of marriage.

For the next three years, the couple threw themselves into work at Bethesda. James was in charge of temporal affairs, which meant that he had the primary responsibility for putting the orphanage on a self-sustaining basis. Mary assisted with the care of the orphans, particularly in making apparel for them. Near the end of their tenure at Bethesda, Mary became pregnant and in 1745 gave birth to their first child, James, named after his father and paternal grandfather. Over the next eighteen years she would give birth to nine more children. But in what must have reminded James of his own mother's travail in Beverley, Mary saw only three of her children survive early childhood before she died in 1763. The boys' biblical names—James, Joseph, and John—reflect Mary and James's deep-seated faith and desire to raise their children in that faith.

Habersham's spiritual zeal, however, landed him in jail not long after his wedding. Initially, he confined his preaching to the children at Bethesda and to the slaves belonging to Hugh Bryan of South Carolina, one of the orphan house's greatest benefactors. A convert under Whitefield's preaching, Bryan had befriended Habersham and on one occasion made his Goose Creek plantation a haven for the Bethesda orphans when Spanish

soldiers threatened Georgia. Fired by evangelical fervor, Habersham believed that he must preach the gospel not only to slaves and orphans, but to his neighbors in Savannah. He thought that the new Anglican priest, Christopher Orton, was not preaching the "one thing needful," the necessity of a new birth, and Habersham decided to confront him about his shortcomings. In doing so, Habersham crossed a line with behavior that offended the magistrates' sensibilities and met with Whitefield's disapproval. The magistrates cited him for disturbing the peace, and Whitefield admonished him for meddling in spiritual matters instead of focusing on the temporal challenges at the orphanage.

The president of the colony, William Stephens, recorded the incident that occurred on Monday, January 11, 1742, relating what happened from the formal complaint filed by the rector: "Mr. [Christopher] Orton had now been long enough among us, to get a taste of what he might expect plenty of unless some restraint was to be put upon the liberties taken by a Set of Methodists, newly Sprung up under Discipline of their Master [George] Whit[e]field, personally to affront and revile the Doctrine of a Minister of the Church of England, appointed by the honble. the Trustees to exercise his Function in these parts." With considerable sarcasm, Stephens continued, "In Order to begin this good work with our New Minister, James Habersham (appointed Major Domo, over the Household at Bethesda, in Mr Whit[e]fields absence) thought fit to come to Town, accompanied with Mr. [Jonathan] Barber, the presbyterian Minister, and [Patrick] Hunter, the Apothecary." On Monday afternoon, Habersham and Barber "sent word to Mr. Orton, that if he was at home, they would come and drink Tea with him, to which he returned in Answer that they should be welcome." Orton soon regretted his hospitality when, shortly after he welcomed his guests, they began peppering him with doctrinal questions as if he were a catechist. In what Stephens labeled "uncharitable and Scurrilous Behaviour," Habersham and Barber denounced Orton for "preaching false Doctrine, (tho they never heard him) charging him with being no Christian; and not understanding the Articles of the Church of England, and asking how he dared to preach without being duly call'd thereunto by the Holy Spirit; with a great deal more of the like cant, they left him."[26]

Very quickly word of what had transpired in the rector's study became the talk of Savannah. Stephens related what happened next: "The Magistrates being fully informed, of what all the Town now talked of (Some extolling the Zeal of Mr. Barber against the Doctrine of our most eminent Divines of

the Church of England, and some detesting his unfair dealing with Mr. Orton on Monday last . . .).” On Stephens’s request, Thomas Bosomworth, clerk of the parish and an eyewitness to the confrontation, appeared before the magistrates and presented an account of the “Substance of what passed on Monday last betwixt James Habersham, Mr. Barber and Mr. Orton, which he was ready to make Affidavit.” Based on Bosomworth’s charges, the assistants issued a warrant requiring Habersham and Barber to appear before them the following week to answer the accusations against them.[27] The magistrates’ swift action underscored the importance they attached to what they considered to be gross insolence toward authority.

On Wednesday, January 20, Habersham and Barber appeared before the Council to hear the charges brought against them. In a show of “the greater Solemnity of the Affair,” the officials insisted that the entire board of magistrates sit as a court to consider the matter. Stephens regarded the Methodists’ behavior as uncivil and was convinced that “every unprejudiced Person” recognized their hatred “towards all who differ’d from them in point of Doctrine, more especially the Church of England.”[28] After hearing witnesses testify about what had transpired in Orton’s study, the Council ordered Habersham and Barber to appear before a grand jury. After giving sureties for their appearances, the zealous Methodists left the chambers.

When Habersham and Barber next appeared before the Council, they were defiant and persisted in their righteous defense of their actions. Stephens had expected, if not remorse, at least respect for the law. He recorded, however, that the two zealots “appeared again; but in a different manner from what was expected, for instead of offering any Bail, they only fell into Arguments concerning the Doctrine they maintained.” Accompanying them were “three or four of their most noted Devotees,” who demanded “insolently a Right to be heard in Behalf of the Persons Accused.” Denying their demand, Stephens explained that the hearing was not about a religious cause or theological dispute, and he ordered them to refrain from disrupting the hearing. When they persisted in being “Clamarous, and very noisy,” the Council ordered the constable to remove the demonstrators. As Habersham and Barber refused to give bail, “a Mittimus was made by the Magistrates to carry them to Prison, whither they went persecuted (as ’twas said) for the Sake of Christ.”[29]

A week after Habersham and Barber were jailed, the grand jury found sufficient evidence to indict them on two counts. The first presentment was for their insolent behavior at the rectory. The second was “for their farther

ill Behaviour with Regard to Mr. Orton, at the time when the Magistrates were Examining into the former." Two days later, the case came to trial. Stephens recorded the proceedings: "Messrs. Barbers and Habershams Tryals came on this morning, when after a full hearing, the Jury found them guilty of both Presentments; and the Judgment given by the Court was, to pay a fine of 5 Marks each to the Trustees, and to find Sureties in a Recognizance of 50£ Sterling for their Behaviour for a year &c, which was done, and they were discharged."[30] Thereupon Habersham and Barber left jail and returned to Bethesda.

Habersham sought redress for his treatment from James Oglethorpe. A trustee and commander of the garrison, Oglethorpe agreed with Habersham that he had been wrongfully accused and treated. Accordingly, he voiced his protest both to the magistrates in Georgia and to the trustees in London. Whitefield later expressed his appreciation to the general for "espousing my friends cause when I think they were apparently wronged." He assured Oglethorpe that he and Habersham had "the good of the colony at heart."[31]

Immediately after hearing of Habersham's conviction, Whitefield, having again returned to England, pronounced it a miscarriage of justice. On learning of the events leading to his friend's arrest, imprisonment, and trial, the evangelist assured Habersham in a letter: "I find you have been wrongfully imprisoned." He pledged that he would write the trustees and meet with them as soon as possible to lodge his protest. In his letter to the trustees, Whitefield linked his friend's cause with that of the struggling colony. While admitting that Barber's language regarding Orton was "too harsh" (especially in asserting that the Anglican rector "was no Christian"), Whitefield declared the legal proceedings to have been highly irregular and termed the arrests "religious persecution." He warned that further persecution would "be a great discouragement to people's settling in *Georgia.*"[32] Whitefield concluded his letter by requesting the trustees to instruct the magistrates in Savannah to "let the Orphan-house managers alone."[33] In private, however, he chastised Habersham for inciting religious controversy, instructing him to stick to the temporal affairs of the orphanage.

Superintendent of Temporal Affairs

By his own admission, Habersham was no farmer. He did, however, understand that the key to a profitable plantation was productivity, and he

knew that productivity depended on hardworking, affordable laborers. Like all planters, Habersham's success hinged on finding a reliable workforce in a labor-short land.

Because of his successful fund-raising campaign in England, Whitefield had cash, a rare commodity in Georgia, and therefore he and Habersham could hire laborers. According to Whitefield's financial reports on the orphanage, he raised and expended altogether about fifteen thousand pounds sterling on Bethesda, a huge sum that approximated the colony's average total annual income from all sources: parliamentary grants, charitable contributions, and adventurers' payments.[34] With those funds, the orphan house managers became northern Georgia's leading employer during the construction of the orphanage. However, Habersham knew that he could not operate a profitable plantation with wage labor, especially in Georgia, where land was cheap and labor rates high. With the supply of workers falling short of the demand for their labor, wages rose to levels much above those that prevailed in England for similar work. Moreover, with inexpensive land available for anyone who was willing to work it, Georgians preferred to own and work their own land rather than work for someone else. And if they did agree to work for wages, they demanded rates that Habersham termed "dear."

In establishing their plantation at Bethesda, Whitefield and Habersham considered two very different models. Their preferred model was the Salzburgers at Ebenezer, who created a community of yeoman farmers working their own plots. Unlike Ebenezer, however, Bethesda lacked a sufficient number of families necessary to create such a community. The second model was the so-called Malcontents, a group of Georgia planters who for years had petitioned the trustees for permission to use slave labor. Although Whitefield and Habersham did not join the Malcontents in calling publicly for slave labor, they recognized that they would need to rely on a body of dependents. Because slaves were prohibited, they hoped to make their plantation a thriving enterprise by using two types of dependent labor: indentured servants and orphans. They would then supplement that core by hiring other people as wage earners to clear land, construct buildings, and so forth.

Initially, the trustees assisted Habersham in his search for laborers by assigning him some of their own indentured servants, that is, those that the trustees had sent to Georgia at their expense. One Christian Bender, age forty-six, and his niece, Elizabeth, age twenty-four, arrived on October 7,

1738, with the German Palatines and were "appointed to work on the lands for Religious uses under Mr. Habershams directions." Christian Kreamer, a forty-nine-year-old farmer, his wife, and two children were also "delivered to Mr. Habersham to be employed on the lands for Religious uses at Savannah." Others under Habersham's superintendence included the widow Bishoven, thirty-nine, Jo. Adam Miller, forty-eight, a tailor, and Samuel Parker, sixteen.[35]

The resident orphans represented a second source of workers, but securing their labor would again place the Methodists at odds with the magistrates. Habersham and Whitefield insisted that they had rights to all orphans in the colony, a claim that triggered disputes between them and other planters facing labor shortages. The first confrontation occurred when Whitefield attempted to take back to the orphanage Peter and Charles Tondee, two teenage boys who currently worked for Henry Parker, one of the assistants. Whitefield claimed that the trustees' authorization extended even to orphans who were already apprenticed to a settler and living within that person's home. Regarding one lad of fifteen or sixteen that Whitefield wanted to remove immediately, Parker argued that he "thought it would be a great Hardship to have that Boy taken from him, now he is grown capable of doing him some Service, after living so long with him when he could do him none." In other words, Parker wanted the benefits from the boy's labor, especially after incurring much cost in raising the lad. Whitefield replied that the boy would be of greater value to him and his "Purpose, as he could be employed for the Benefit of the other Orphans." Showing his anger by raising his voice, Parker countered that "where the Child was taken Care of as he ought, by a good Master (which the Magistrates might judge of) and without Charge to the Trust; he did suppose such a Boy not to be reckoned an Orphan that Mr. Whitfield was entitled to by the Trust." Whitefield won the point by producing a document from the trustees, which authorized him to take under his care all orphans in the colony.[36]

Despite the use of orphans as laborers, Habersham soon found his workforce to be inadequate. Frustrated by slow progress in clearing the land, he became an advocate of slave labor. He argued that Africans were better suited to endure the colony's hot climate, and he contended that Georgia-produced commodities, laden with high labor costs, could not compete with Carolina's slave-produced staples. Habersham chose to express his views in a letter to the trustees rather than in published tracts as the Malcontents preferred. He opined that Europeans were ill suited for taming the

Georgia wilderness. "Though the people have been as industrious as possible," he wrote, "they are not able to live . . . [and support themselves] with [their] own labor." He claimed that "the sun is so extremely hot here in the summer, that no white man can stay in the field the best part of the day." Moreover, he added that "all who come to settle here are put into a wilderness, which they have to clear before they can plant it, which is so intolerably costly, with white hands, that I have heard some affirm, that to clear our good land—which is swamp—effectually with them, would cost almost as much as they could buy land for in some parts of England."[37] Although Habersham did not become one of the Malcontents and openly oppose the trustees, he agreed with the group's call for slave labor.

The trustees were not swayed by arguments calling for slaves, preferring instead a Georgia of yeoman farmers. Thus, Habersham would have to make Bethesda profitable with the laborers on hand. The challenge was to find a cash crop that his workforce could cultivate at a profit. Georgia planters had a number of ideas about which cash crop offered the greatest potential. William Stephens thought that cotton had great possibilities and determined to experiment with its cultivation. He knew that the perennial West India or long-staple variety died every winter in Georgia. By comparison, the annual short-staple species flourished in the colony. The problem with short-staple cotton was not its quality—it was as fine as that of the long-staple species—but its labor-intensive preparation. The fiber clung tenaciously to seeds and had to be extracted by laborers' fingers.

The Salzburgers at Ebenezer also experimented with cotton production. Like Stephens, John Bolzius observed that "cotton grows easily and abundantly here, however, it has this inconvenience that the seeds stick very firmly in the lint and it takes a man or a woman a whole day if one wishes to free a quarter of a pound from the seeds and prepare it for spinning." But he added that someone had devised a "little machine that costs a couple of shillings, through the help of which a single person, even a child of six years, can prepare from four to six pounds and not get even the least bit tired."[38] With a cotton "gin" available forty years before Eli Whitney's invention, Georgians had the means of making cotton a major source of revenue. But before they introduced cotton cultivation on a large scale, they found more immediate profits in rice and indigo, staples that had made many South Carolinians wealthy. Cotton production, and therefore the cotton gin, would await a later chapter in American history.

Habersham and Whitefield had a different perspective on separating

cotton fiber from the tough seeds. They viewed the task as one perfectly suited for little children. Whitefield informed Stephens that he intended to "get a good Stock" of cotton "for Employment of the least of his Flock."[39] On Tuesday, January 29, 1740, Whitefield recorded in his journal that "this day I began the cotton manufacture, and agreed with a woman to teach the little ones to spin and card." With their usual optimism and zest, he and Habersham threw themselves into their endeavors without reserve, trusting God and hard work to produce the desired results. Accordingly, Whitefield purchased three hundred pounds of cotton and agreed "to take all the cotton, hemp, and flax that shall be produced the following year through the whole province." With almost forty children "under his care," either as orphans or as apprentices, he believed that the work of preparing fibers for the marketplace was suitable for children and would enable the orphan house to earn much needed income.[40]

Cotton was not the staple of choice for the Georgia trustees. When they learned that Habersham was establishing a "cotton manufactory" at Bethesda, they quickly instructed him to stop such efforts because the production violated the Navigation Acts' prohibition of colonial manufacturing. In a letter to Whitefield, the trustees informed him that they were "sensible that the setting up any Looms in Georgia will be highly disagreeable to the Parliament and the Publick; who have been always of Opinion that our Colonies should only raise Produces for Manufacturing at home instead of carrying on any Manufacture themselves." Thus, they wrote, "they are determined that no Looms should be set up in the Orphan House or in any Part of the Colony." They concluded by instructing Whitefield and Habersham to refocus their attention on silk production, "which is a work that will be of the highest advantage, and it is intended to be the principal Commodity of the Province."[41] Once again Habersham had encountered an imposed restriction to his enterprise. Between parliamentary trade laws and trustee land and labor policies, he, like the protesting Malcontents, found the burden of making a profit in trustee-run Georgia increasingly challenging.

Undaunted, Habersham turned his characteristic determination and optimism toward the production of silk and wine. With no better alternative and with abundant child labor, Habersham decided to make Bethesda the center of the "*intended Manufacture of this Province, Silk and Wine.*" Accordingly, he and the orphans planted "about 800 Vines" and soon informed Whitefield that "those that are Judges say, they [the vines] throve

the best of any in the Province."[42] The following spring, buoyed by the early success, Habersham expanded the vineyard by an additional three hundred plants.

At the same time, he also reported a promising beginning in silk production at Bethesda. He indicated that in 1742 "we made about two Pound and a half, of Silk Balls, but could not make more for want of Mulberry-Leaves." He thought that the orphanage was especially well suited for silk making because of the "many children, who can do the chief, if not the whole of the Work, with a little inspection." Habersham planted two hundred mulberry trees in 1742 and, encouraged by that initial venture, planted twelve hundred the following year. Besides the economic benefits of silk and wine production, there were moral advantages as well. Habersham explained, "we think it our Duty to encourage Industry, as well as to promote Religion in its Life & Power." Turning Bethesda into a beehive of industry, Habersham reported that in addition to their work with silk and wine, the children cut firewood, cleared ground, dug potatoes, and sowed grain during "vacant Hours from School."[43]

Despite the initial optimism, silk and wine production failed as lucrative staples for Bethesda or Georgia. The soil and climate proved unsuitable for both, forcing Habersham to look elsewhere for means of generating income. Like hundreds of other Georgians, he was finding the job of scratching out a living in the Georgia soil a daunting effort indeed. It did not help that Whitefield, far removed from daily operations, hatched even more grandiose plans for Bethesda. Placing his hopes more on divine deliverance than sound financial principles, Whitefield determined to expand operations at the same time Habersham concluded that contraction was the more prudent course. Writing on January 31, 1740, Whitefield informed a correspondent that "I have taken in upwards of twenty children already, and I take in more daily." He added, "I am building a large house, have many servants, and a good stock of cattle." He acknowledged that his project "will cost much money," but he concluded that "our Lord will see to that."[44]

With his ebullient faith, Whitefield expanded the orphanage at a rate that must have been frightening to Habersham, whose mercantile mind knew that in financial projections costs are immediate and concrete while revenues are distant and uncertain. He also was aware that the Bethesda project had eaten up enormous sums with only miniscule income to show for the outlay. Far from discouraged, Whitefield boasted in a letter dated February 29, 1740, that Bethesda now fed "near an hundred mouths daily,"

about three-fourths being servants and laborers engaged in building the main hall and ancillary structures as well as clearing and cultivating land. Whitefield offered no ideas for meeting the mounting costs, expressing instead his belief in "a God who will supply all our wants."[45] The first few years of operation at Bethesda would test that faith.

Returning to the Market

Bethesda's fortunes can be tracked through Habersham and Whitefield's correspondence. Just before his 1741 departure to England, Whitefield gave a glowing report of the orphanage. He noted that after returning from a preaching trip in the northern colonies during fall 1740, he found that "great improvements [had been] made during the time of my absence." In particular, the "great house" was nearing completion and would be inhabitable in about two months. His sunny report masked the troubles Habersham had encountered in bringing the project to its present condition. The Spanish had captured a schooner loaded with bricks for the house, causing a delay in construction. Also lost to the raiders were provisions, foodstuffs and clothing that Habersham had purchased, primarily from Charlestown merchants. That Habersham had to purchase provisions is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it underscored the fact that the orphanage was not self-sufficient; its crops and herds could not supply the residents' demands for food and fiber. Second, it meant that Habersham was paying a premium for goods from Charlestown, because, in addition to paying for goods imported from England, he had to pay transshipment expenses for the Charlestown to Bethesda leg. Wherever he turned, Habersham faced exorbitant costs: high wages, expensive provisions, and devastating losses to enemy hostilities. Fortunately, some South Carolina planters sympathetic to Whitefield's evangelism and some friendly neighboring Indians supplied much-needed supplies to the orphans and workers.[46] As he faced the future, however, Habersham could not depend on such largess. Moreover, Whitefield informed him that he was "in debt about 500 pounds sterling," that is, that he had already spent far more on the orphan house than he had collected in Britain and America.[47]

After delivering that bad news, Whitefield left for England and would not return to Bethesda for more than six years. Habersham remained, facing the lonely and foreboding job of managing a debt-ridden orphanage with little expectation of a reliable stream of donations and, as of 1741, a

plantation that had yet to produce an exportable commodity. For the next two years he worked assiduously against enormous odds to put the charity on a sound footing. In doing so, he revealed the character that would later contribute to his success. He also developed ideas about what must be done if Georgia were to fulfill the trustees' vision for its economic promise.

Habersham's early reports on the state of Bethesda after Whitefield's departure matched the evangelist's hope and optimism. Writing in March 1741, he described the activities of the spring planting season. "As we have so much Land cleared," he wrote, "I intend to try to plant it: Accordingly I have hired 4 or 5 Hands, who with our own Household will be sufficient to plant 20 Acres or upwards with Potatoes, Rice for Fodder next Winter, . . . Corn and Pease and other Necessaries." It is noteworthy that he considered rice, the staple that would eventually reverse Georgia's economic tide and make him a wealthy person, as mere fodder for feeding cattle. The reason was twofold. First, the trustees did not want to compete with Carolina, which already shipped rice in large quantities to London. Instead, they believed that Georgians should produce silk and wine, commodities that Britain currently imported from outside the empire. Second, rice cultivation was very labor intensive, and most Georgia planters could not afford the cost. Nevertheless, Habersham concluded his report on a positive note, assuring Whitefield that "God visibly blesses our Labours so that People are amazed."[48]

Habersham's follow-up report in the summer was again sanguine. "I think I can say to the Glory of God," it began, "that our Family never were in a better Condition." Habersham assured Whitefield that "the Children, the Essence of our Constitution, are well taken care of and watch'd over." Turning to the crops, the news was also bright: "The Garden and Plantation now affords us many comfortable Things, and in great Plenty. Our Stores are well stock'd with Flower and Beef, Etc." He said that the great house was almost completed and would be finished as soon as replacement bricks arrived for those taken by the Spanish. He reported that "all the Boys now lie in the great House. They have got Coats and are laid in sheeting of their own making."[49] Habersham's account suggested that he was succeeding in raising provisions for the orphans. However, he was less optimistic about producing a surplus for the market, at least anytime soon. He thought that the orphanage needed a second plantation, one located in slaveholding South Carolina, to raise commodities for export. He reasoned that if "God should so order it that we might have a Plantation in *Carolina,*

as I believe he will bring it to pass, we shall need but little, if any assistance from abroad."[50] The possibility of such a development arose from Whitefield's friendship with two South Carolina planters, the brothers Jonathan and Hugh Bryan, recent converts under the evangelist's influence.[51] While Habersham doubted if the Georgia plantation could make the orphanage self-sustaining, he did think that a second enterprise with slave labor would do the trick.

Habersham was not the only one reporting on the state of the orphanage. In 1741, conflicting reports on the state of Bethesda surfaced in London and colonial newspapers. John Bolzius, whose orphanage at Ebenezer served as a model for Bethesda, noted that Habersham and his assistants had made "good Progress . . . in their Works of the Vineyard of the Lord." Bolzius expressed his hope that the orphan house would indeed become a "Bethesda," or a house of mercy and a "Blessing to decaying *Georgia.*"[52]

Others, however, offered a very different assessment. Georgians hostile to the charity reported its declining state. Pat Tailfer and other Malcontents described Bethesda in *A True Historical Narrative.* They noted that despite nearly four thousand pounds sterling being spent on it since August 1740, Bethesda "has decayed apace," adding, "their money growing short, they were soon obliged to discharge most of the workmen." The writers indicated that the main building was only half finished. Moreover, they described the site as a "pine barren" surrounded on one side by salt marshes and on the other by woods. The critics concluded by asking where the orphanage could expect financial support in the future, expressing doubt that the institution could offer a legitimate service in "a desart and a forsaken colony."[53]

The criticism stung. In a letter to Whitefield that was published in the evangelical magazine *Weekly History,* Habersham referred to "unaccountable Calumnies [that] have been industriously spread abroad concerning our Institution." He said that the last time he was in South Carolina, several of Whitefield's friends in Charlestown had urged Habersham to publish a "brief Account of the State of our Affairs." He considered complying with their request "upon seeing a Paragraph in the Narrative of Georgia [Tailfer's account], full of unjust Reflections upon the Orphanhouse." Clearly, the criticism and controversy bothered Habersham. Faced with the enormous task of provided for the material well-being of the orphans, he now had to defend the institution's integrity. He debated whether to make a public defense or "let God speak." He pledged to Whitefield, and

himself, that whatever he said in public or private, he would "provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men."[54]

The January 9, 1742, issue of *Weekly History* published Habersham's report that he submitted to Whitefield on the state of affairs at Bethesda. A candid assessment that confirms some of the observations made by the Malcontents, the account is as noteworthy for what it says about Habersham's views of the colony and its management as it is about his perspectives on the orphanage. It begins with an affirmation of faith, expressing belief that "our Work is of God," which accounts for the unsurprising fact that "Satan and his Emissaries rage." The preface also indicates that Habersham felt that he was being persecuted, but rather than leading to self-pity the persecution heightened his understanding of "New Testament" faith.[55]

Turning to the substance of the report, Habersham pledged to give a "plain Narrative of our present State." He opened with a grim assessment of Bethesda: no "visible Fund" existed for its maintenance, it stores of provisions were almost depleted, and Spain had stolen a shipload of bricks destined for the orphanage. Moreover, the charity struggled within a colony hardly capable of sustaining any enterprise. The major complaint was high wages, which drove up construction and cultivation costs at Bethesda. Most inhabitants had left the province, further reducing the supply of workers while sending labor costs even higher. While discussing labor costs, Habersham made one of his first public allusions to the need for slave labor in Georgia. "As we are denied the use of Negroes," the report continued, "we are obliged to employ white Men in Planting, who are not able under the present Footing to defray their Wages and Victuals."[56] For the next eight years, Habersham would repeat this position over and over. After two years as a planter, he had concluded that Georgia's economic future depended on solving the labor problem, and he saw no way to do that but to introduce slaves.

Unable to generate a profit, Habersham turned to Whitefield for a new infusion of capital, but Whitefield's reports offered little promise. After arriving in London in March 1741, the evangelist found that his theological split with John Wesley over predestination had divided Methodists. Moreover, Anglican opposition to the itinerant preacher had intensified. As a consequence, crowds dwindled, and contributions for Bethesda almost dried up. Whitefield informed Habersham of the diminished crowds, noting that throngs of twenty thousand that had formerly crowded to hear him preach now numbered only two or three hundred. Continuing his gloomy report, he added, "it has been a trying time with me." He complained that he had a "large orphan family, consisting of near an hundred, to be main-

tained, four thousand miles off, without the least fund, and in the dearest part of his Majesty's dominions; also, above a thousand pounds in debt for them, and not worth twenty pounds in the world of my own, and threatened to be arrested for three hundred and fifty pounds, drawn for in favour of the Orphan-house."[57] The report certainly was a sobering one for Habersham. It meant that the burden of providing for the residents and workers at Bethesda fell almost entirely on his shoulders. He could not expect much assistance from Whitefield.

Letters from Whitefield over the next several months provided more admonition than funds. Expressing frustration with Habersham's pleas for clothing and provisions for the orphans, Whitefield replied, "I have not, nor can I as yet, make any collections [for the orphan house]; but let us not fear." Without funds, he again depended on faith: "Our heavenly Father, with whom the fatherless find mercy, will yet provide; let us only seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other necessary things shall be added to us."[58] By midsummer, contributions increased, leading Whitefield to assure Habersham, "God will yet provide for you." In late July he informed Habersham that he had acquired some hats and shoes that Habersham had ordered for the children. Whitefield expressed his hope to send other items on the superintendent's order along with "some cash," but at the same time he reminded the Georgian, "the arrears hang on me yet." The next letter to Habersham contained no money but bore an admonition that surely rankled its recipient. Whitefield wrote, "Be not one moment idle. Redeem your precious time."[59] At a time when Habersham was doing all he could to scratch out a living on the Bethesda plantation, he hardly needed a lesson on time management.

Throughout most of the next year, Whitefield offered little tangible hope for financial relief. In fall 1741, he informed Habersham that his intended early return to Georgia was on hold. Habersham had counted on his friend's coming back soon, having already requested him to bring supplies from a planned stopover in Philadelphia. Unable to send Habersham money, Whitefield expressed his delight in learning that Habersham had negotiated credit terms with friends that enabled him to "go to market without money." A Georgia merchant and magistrate and a generous supporter of Bethesda, Thomas Jones, extended credit to Habersham, as did the Bryan brothers of South Carolina. Nonetheless, by late 1741 Whitefield grew uneasy when he did not receive any correspondence from Habersham. He wrote his superintendent and expressed his "wonder to find [no letters] from you." Referring to an incident in the life of the model orphan at Halle,

Germany, Whitefield implored Habersham to "be not discouraged; professor F[rancke]'s students were once obliged to sell their cloaths to buy candles." Still, in July 1742, Whitefield provided more hopeful words than hard cash. "At present," he wrote, "I am looking up to our great Householder for fresh supplies." Sensing that Habersham's spirits were flagging, he added, "My friend and brother, you shall in no wise lose your reward."[60]

Though a man of great faith, Habersham also understood market realities. To survive, Bethesda must become profitable, and to do that the plantation needed large infusions of capital and labor. As he surveyed the plantation at Bethesda in 1743, Habersham realized that he had failed to make Bethesda an ongoing enterprise. Instead, he was scratching out a meager subsistence on what amounted to a dirt farm. Rather than producing surpluses for the Atlantic market that brought in hundreds of pounds sterling, he generated a fraction of that amount, and it came from bounties the trustees paid for producing provisions, such as peas, potatoes, and corn. That year, the orphanage received a total of only sixteen pounds sterling in bounty payments.

Failing as a planter, Habersham fell back on his training as a merchant and considered other ways that he could generate income for the orphanage. Knowing that there was a high demand for English manufactured goods in Georgia, he concluded that one way to raise money was through buying merchandise in London and selling it in Georgia for a profit, with the proceeds going to Bethesda. Whitefield was in London and could act as Habersham's "correspondent," the designation for American merchants' suppliers in Britain. Accordingly, Whitefield, on Habersham's instructions, went to various wholesalers in the metropolis and bought goods that Habersham knew he could sell in Savannah. On October 25, 1741, Whitefield shipped one small cargo to Habersham, explaining, "I have, by this ship that brings you this sent you 70 pounds worth of different sorts of goods to be disposed of, and the money to be applied for the use of the *Orphan-house.*" By sending merchandise especially suited for Georgians' tastes and means, he hoped to leverage the donations he had expended for the goods. Items such as damask tablecloths were of no use at the orphanage but would sell briskly in Savannah.[61] Although profits from the sale of the merchandise did not satisfy Bethesda's capital needs, the effort had important long-term implications for the orphanage and for Habersham. In two years, Habersham would leave Bethesda and open a mercantile house in Savannah. No doubt the experience he had in selling English goods on

behalf of the orphanage confirmed his belief that he could be more valuable to the orphanage as a prosperous merchant than as its superintendent. He could purchase provisions at a favorable rate, and he could donate a portion of his profits to the charity.

In addition to assisting the orphanage through selling goods at a profit, Habersham steered the struggling charity through rough financial waters by establishing lines of credit in Georgia and South Carolina. Because of a cash shortage in colonial America, London merchants generally extended generous credit terms to their agents and correspondents in the colonies, terms that often extended to twelve months on most goods. In turn, colonial merchants granted similar terms to their customers. Habersham went to Charlestown and negotiated with merchants to sell goods to the orphanage on book credit. Some no doubt granted credit because they were sympathetic to Whitefield's work. Others, though, soon discovered Habersham to be a sound manager who did not overextend himself and kept his account current. Habersham was learning how to "go to market without money."[62]

But servicing debt required income, and Bethesda's operations generated little revenue. Facing ongoing expenses with little revenue, Habersham resorted to desperate means to keep the orphanage afloat, including the sale of assets. For 30 pounds he sold the trustees the orphanage's long boat, to be used by the pilot at Tybee Island for escorting vessels in and out of the mouth of the Savannah River. As one familiar with business economics, Habersham realized that cannibalizing assets for much-needed cash was no way to build a viable enterprise. A final means of obtaining cash reflects the desperate financial straits Habersham faced in 1743. For three years he had retained almost 70 pounds of the 150 pounds the trustees had entrusted to Whitefield for building the church in Savannah. Though the trustees had repeatedly asked for an accounting, Habersham had delayed, perhaps because he had used a sizable portion for orphanage operations rather than for the church. In summer 1743, he revealed records that showed almost 80 pounds spent on acquiring and carting stones for the building and the remainder in his possession. It was then that he had to sell the long boat in order to repay the funds.[63]

In early 1744, Habersham provided Whitefield with his most comprehensive and bleakest report on the state of the orphanage. While Habersham reported spiritual vitality at Bethesda, he painted a gloomy financial picture. First, he repeated the mantra about high costs, especially labor ex-

penses, hinting again that South Carolina might be a better venue for the charity. He complained about "the many Expences both as to provisions, and Labour, which . . . cant be avoided here, tho' might elsewhere, where every Thing may be had, and done, to the best Advantage."[64] In suggesting that relocation might solve some of the orphanage's financial woes, Habersham expressed sentiments echoed by scores of settlers who left the colony, despairing of improving their lives in Georgia.

Furthermore, gifts and donations to the orphanage had slowed to a trickle. Habersham reported, "I think I have not receiv'd 10 [pounds] Sterling in Cash, as a Gift, and but little provisions for the Orphan House this six months past."[65] Bethesda was on a course leading to bankruptcy: high costs and low revenue.

But Habersham was not one to despair; nor was he one to identify problems without offering solutions. Thus, he wrote that while considering how to generate cash and provisions for the orphans, "I began to think what Means God wou'd take to supply such a great number of People. . . . Accordingly God put in the Heart of a dear Friend [Thomas Jones] . . . to lend Mr. [Francis] Harris and me a large Sum of money, not only to purchase a good Store of Provisions and Goods . . . but also to buy" a small schooner suitable for coastal trade. Thomas Jones had been the trustees' storekeeper and was returning to England, and Francis Harris had been his assistant. Indeed, Jones had brought Harris to Georgia as his servant, and now, in 1743, with Jones providing the necessary inventory and assets, Harris and Habersham were opening a mercantile house in Savannah by which they intended to supply Georgians with provisions imported from other colonies and manufactured goods shipped from England. Habersham assured Whitefield that he entered this new business venture in order to assist the orphanage as well as to profit personally. "I hope," he wrote, "as our Trade is considerable, if God is pleased to prosper us, our Profits will be very well, and that Part of it, which may arise to me, I propose for the Orphan house." Moreover, there would be other benefits for Bethesda. Habersham explained that through the trading firm to be known as Harris & Habersham, he would have the opportunity "of getting Credit, as well as supplying the Orphan house much cheaper with what it calls for, than ever I did."[66] In other words, by once again becoming a merchant he would be of more value to the missionary work in Georgia than he had been as Whitefield's superintendent at Bethesda.

CHAPTER THREE

Harris & Habersham

Pioneering Merchant

After five years in Georgia, James Habersham had little to show for his struggles. He had failed to make Bethesda a self-sustaining plantation, and he had alienated the magistrates over his religious zeal. But his fortunes underwent a dramatic transformation in the five years from 1743 to 1748, as he rose to become one of Georgia's wealthiest residents as managing partner in the colony's leading mercantile house, Harris & Habersham. Without question his ascendancy is an early American success story.[1] How he went so far so fast says much about James Habersham the person, but it also speaks to the nature of trade in the early stages of the colony's development and the opportunities a frontier settlement offered enterprising individuals.

In leaving Bethesda and the life of a missionary, Habersham returned to the arena that he knew best, the Atlantic marketplace. With no agricultural background, he had been a stranger to the life of a planter, declaring in a statement of the obvious that he was no farmer. In addition to his inexperience, he operated in a colony where no one had yet solved the basic problems of what staples to grow and how best to grow them. But now he was reentering the countinghouse, whose rhythms and rules he understood from his London years. He had a clear, practical understanding of how markets worked and sought from the outset to make sure that his new partnership operated according to the principles he learned in London.

Habersham understood that success in the marketplace depended on more than an individual's vision, knowledge, determination, and work ethic, however important those assets were. He knew that the market consisted of a large number of people that the thriving merchant must attract and satisfy: investors, partners, suppliers, customers, employees, financiers, insurers, shippers, and customs officials. To prosper, a merchant had to cultivate connections with dependable, knowledgeable individuals. Many colonial merchants had the advantage of extensive family networks that

spanned the Atlantic and provided personal ties to financial and commercial centers in London. Lacking those familial bonds, Habersham had to build his own network from scratch. He did that by demonstrating to trading partners that he was someone with whom they could do business profitably, and he soon established a sterling reputation as a competent and honest merchant through solid performance: paying bills on time, delivering quality goods, and opening new markets. Habersham acknowledged the importance of solid business relationships when, after establishing himself in Savannah, he rejected a friend's plea to move his business to a northern colony with the succinct explanation, "I am so connected here."[2]

By the end of the 1740s, mercantile and political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic recognized Habersham as Georgia's most notable success. Commenting on the ascendancy of Habersham and his firm, John Bolzius held the partners up as exemplars of successful merchants in a colony that posed numerous obstacles to trade. He said that "if one did not know what trading in this country can earn when done cleverly, prudently, and happily, one could learn this by the example set by the two young business partners Habersham and Harris." He remembered that "a few years ago they had nothing of their own but began with borrowed money." Now, he continued, "they have built a great deal and respectably," and they had accumulated enough capital and credit that "they can also order their own ship from London."[3] As they prepared to turn the colony over to the Lords of Trade in 1751, the trustees singled out Habersham as evidence of what an industrious individual could do in Georgia. They informed the Lords of Trade, "Mr Habershaw, an eminent merchant in the colony had insured 1,750 pounds sterling on goods upon his own account the last year."[4] The struggling missionary and planter had become a success.

Import Merchants

In August 1744, William Stephens informed the trustees that James Habersham had purchased a corner lot in Savannah for the purpose of "Trade." Apparently, he reported, Habersham had concluded that his time was "better employd in Trade here than otherwise at Bethesda." The property had a "plain single House" on it, which was in disrepair, and Habersham intended to "pull it quite down, and rebuild it with such Appendages as he sees fit."[5] Two months later, Stephens reported to the trustees on the progress of Harris & Habersham's new quarters. "The Purchaser has al-

ready pulld the House to pieces," he wrote, "and is about building one of much larger dimensions, with Storehouses, &c." Though Stephens had had some unpleasant dealings with Habersham, nonetheless, he was impressed with the former schoolmaster's performance as a merchant. "From the Trade He and his Partner Harris have carried on for a year past," Stephens said of Habersham, "I believe he may afford it, & attain to be one of our First Rate Storekeepers in this Town."[6]

When Habersham and his partner Francis Harris opened their business in Savannah, they ignored warnings of both nature and history. Several enterprising men had preceded them in trying to operate profitable retail and wholesale outlets in Georgia, all without success. The obstacles were many and formidable. First, the river at Savannah was too shallow for oceangoing vessels bringing manufactured goods directly from England, which meant that Georgia merchants had to purchase merchandise from Charlestown importers and transship the cargo from the South Carolina port to Savannah. Though Carolina merchants found trade with Georgians profitable, their neighbors to the south complained about the arrangement. Georgia planter John Graham explained the problem. Like Carolinians, Georgians incurred the "first cost" of the goods as purchased in London and absorbed all the shipping expenses from London to Charlestown. But, in addition, they paid the "extravagant Charges of unlading, and storing their goods in Charles Town, wharfage, Freight of the Schooner to Savannah, and all the other Expenses."[7]

Habersham attributed Savannah's backward condition as much to unimaginative, unresponsive public officials as to the port's natural defects. Unlike Charlestown shippers, Georgia merchants could not rely on government to provide the infrastructure necessary for importing and exporting. One example will illustrate the problem. Situated on a high bluff, Savannah presented shippers with a major challenge: how to raise and lower commodities from river level to the top of the bluff. Shortly after Oglethorpe's arrival in 1733, the magistrates erected a crane for loading and unloading vessels. However, by the time Harris & Habersham began operations almost ten years later, the crane was inoperable from disuse and disrepair. The magistrates were neither willing to appropriate funds to put the crane in good working order nor to promote the economic development that would justify the cost of replacing it. Similarly, the public wharves and warehouses were woefully inadequate.

In addition to the lack of infrastructure, Georgia merchants faced a severe

cash shortage along with tight credit. When Habersham and Harris opened their business in 1743, the colony was barely a decade old and still struggling to gain an economic foothold. Population was tiny, numbering only about two thousand men, women, and children. Georgians had yet to discover a profitable staple for export, as evidenced by anemic export figures that totaled less than one thousand pounds sterling in 1740 or about 10 shillings per capita. (By the 1760s, Habersham alone would ship twice that amount annually in rice from his plantations.) Georgia's paltry exports meant that planters and merchants did not have the means to draw good bills of exchange on London merchants, which in other colonies provided an important part of the money supply. Nevertheless, desperate Georgians resorted to the practice of drawing unauthorized bills of exchange on the trustees as a medium of exchange. Concerned by the practice and fearing that the settlers might become overextended, default on payment, and establish a poor credit rating, the trustees addressed the problem in 1735. They "ordered the printing and distribution of a form of paper money—preprinted bills of exchange that were issued in single units rather than in sets and were thus called 'sola' bills." By restricting the circulating currency principally to these endorsed bills of exchange, the trustees hoped to ensure that the sola bills would maintain their face value in pounds sterling. Each quarter, the trustees sent a supply of sola bills—known as the estimate—sufficient for Georgians employed in public service to conduct their business.[8]

However, as with most trustee policies, there was a gap between intention and execution. In wartime, the estimate was sometimes delayed. When the trustees could not send the estimate during the summer of 1746 because of the war with Spain, many public servants in Georgia had no choice but to seek credit from Harris & Habersham, pledging their future claims on the estimate as security. After being in business for only three full years, Harris & Habersham had established sufficient credit to act as a bank during the crisis. According to President Stephens, Harris & Habersham provided credit to consumers while the estimate was delayed, issuing promissory notes in exchange for the borrower's claim on the estimate. When Georgia's first royal governor, John Reynolds, arrived in the early 1750s, he noted the importance of Harris & Habersham in providing a circulating currency in a cash-strapped colony. Reynolds said that for some time Georgia had been under the necessity of "having something for want of cash to serve as a medium of Trade, there being scarce any Currency in the Province but Promissory Notes of Harris & Habersham." Some citizens believed that Harris & Habersham had put private gain ahead of public service. One bit-

ter critic pointed out that the lenders did not put themselves out for the public good at all, either demanding "ready Money" for all sales or restricting credit to the exact limit of an individual's share of the estimate. The same critic told the trustees that Harris & Habersham had succeeded in business almost "intirely from the Advantage of your Honours Estimate."[9]

To succeed in business, Harris & Habersham had to win the trust of Georgians, and that meant overcoming a strong negative image of traders. Previous merchants operating in the colony had failed, and their business practices had soured many consumers on traders who had seemed to place quick, short-term profits over reliable customer service. From the earliest settlement, Georgia freeholders complained about the scarcity, cost, and quality of retail goods available in the colony. Public and private storekeepers attempted to supply colonists with necessary provisions. From the initial settlement, the trustees operated a public store "for the support of their servants, and such as went over at the Trustees' charge, with whom they contracted to find [sic] them one year in provisions gratis, and to whom it was continued a year or more longer as their wants required." In his first year in Georgia, Habersham had depended on the trustees' store. The trustees also directed the public storekeeper to sell provisions to freeholders, "to supply them from the store for money or upon credit at prime cost, (which included freight and loss)." According to one of the trustees, the Earl of Egmont, the store advanced freeholders more than eight hundred pounds in provisions and goods over the first two years of operations.[10]

Consumers complained about goods and prices at the public and private stores. In 1737/38, a grand jury of forty-four freeholders indicted Thomas Causton for, among other things, abusing the public trust as storekeeper. The panel claimed that Causton "hath the dangerous power in his hands of alluring weak-minded people to comply with unjust measures." Specifically, the jury claimed that he "made great advancements on provisions and goods sold out of the Trustees' store to the inhabitants contrary to Mr. Oglethorpe's promise when he first settled this colony." Moreover, they alleged that Causton sold "sometimes bad and unwholsome" provisions at "dear rates."[11]

One of the trustees, the Earl of Egmont, defended Causton. He pointed out that those who arrived at the trustees' charge had no complaint "whether the stores were sold dear or cheap since they had them for nothing." And those freeholders who purchased goods from the public store had no basis for charging Causton with making "too great advancements [i.e., profits] on these provisions and goods." Besides, Egmont argued, settlers

had a choice: "there were private stores where persons might furnish themselves, if it was found that they sold cheaper than Mr. Causton."[12]

From shortly after its settlement in 1733, Georgia attracted merchants who established private stores selling provisions and imported manufactures to those with money or credit. However, the number of storekeepers soon exceeded consumer demand. Describing trade in Savannah in early 1736, one retailer complained that, on arriving in Savannah to vend a "Cargoe of Goods consigned to [him]," he learned from "several of the Freeholders . . . the town was already overstocked with Goods, and trade in general at a very low Ebb." On further investigation, he discovered that, indeed, "a number of Scotch Gentlemen . . . who arrived here soon after Mr. Oglethorpe went for England in 1734 . . . fell into trade."[13] Thus, within two years of first settlement, the Savannah market suffered from too many, not too few, retail goods.

Like the trustees' store, private stores came under heavy criticism. Retailers stood accused of "taking advantage of the peoples necessities, and . . . the extravagant prices they themselves paid for goods from Carolina." In some cases, they took out executions against customers with delinquent accounts, and in others they "imprisoned the persons indebted to them after two or three months credit." The culprits were a small group of Scots who "engrossed most part of the Trade." Then "they advanced their prices, and by fair outward pretences drew abundance of people into debt, soon after which they threatened to serve executions in order to get houses and lands morgaged to them."[14] If Harris & Habersham were to succeed, the partners needed to overcome deep consumer suspicion.

Habersham and Harris paid close attention to local demand. That meant importing the quantity and assortment of goods and provisions at prices that poor Georgians could afford. Francis Harris was particularly attuned to consumer needs and resources. For years he had served as an assistant to the trustees' storekeeper and had seen firsthand what merchandise moved most readily and what stayed on the shelves. Though the store had been established to supply settlers arriving at the trustees' expense, it also sold goods to inhabitants who paid their way. Habersham's experience at Bethesda introduced him to the local consumer market. As the orphanage's purchasing agent operating within the constraints of a tight budget, he knew what kinds of goods and what prices cash-strapped buyers demanded. He went to Charlestown on numerous occasions to shop for the children and staff at Bethesda and thereby became familiar with the range of stock available in

merchants' inventories. And in his one foray into importing, Habersham had demonstrated a knack for gauging local demand, successfully ordering goods in London for resale in Savannah at a profit that benefited the orphans.

As an import mercantile company, Harris & Habersham exploited three markets. The first, and largest single market, consisted of Georgia inhabitants. Most of the colony's approximately 2,500 to 3,000 residents during the 1740s required provisions—such as fruits, flour, salt, beer—usually shipped to Savannah from New England and the middle colonies. And they needed English manufactured goods—such as plows, hoes, saws, nails, combs, cloth—transported from London. The second market was the military, consisting of the regimental soldiers stationed at Frederica who demanded provisions—foodstuffs, clothing, arms, and ammunition. In supplying the military, Harris & Habersham soon became the largest single government contractor in Georgia, and as such, the firm was also the largest creditor on the trustees' accounts payable. The third market was the Indian trade, the smallest segment of business to Harris & Habersham, yet one that represented great potential for profits. The trustees viewed trade as the centerpiece of their strategy for making loyal allies of the Creeks and Cherokees living all along the Georgia frontier. Accordingly, the trustees allocated huge sums for gifts designed to win and hold the natives' friendship. For most of the 1740s, Harris & Habersham could not fully exploit the Indian market because the firm was not a direct exporter to England and thus was unable to offer ready markets for Indian deerskins.

Whichever market they sought to satisfy, Habersham and Harris had to pay careful attention to the assortment, quantity, and price of goods they made available for sale. Inventory mistakes, such as too few goods, too many goods, the wrong mix, or overpriced stock, could spell disaster for Savannah merchants. Habersham knew firsthand how a firm could lose control of its business. After he had left the mercantile business in the mid-1750s, Habersham helped a number of Georgians become commission merchants. One such person was James Whitefield, the evangelist's nephew. But alas, the young man soon found himself facing bankruptcy. Habersham intervened and helped him recover, and in a letter to George Whitefield, Habersham explained the circumstances surrounding his nephew's misfortunes. He identified James's problem as an "ill assorted Parcel of Goods," noting specifically that "his Jewelry and other Trumpery . . . [was] by no means suitable for this place." Also, James's business was undercapitalized, resulting in his being chronically "pressed for payments, and consequently his

Credit was bad, and as He was paying Interest, and must live, the longer he went on, He would be more incapable of satisfying his Creditors."[15] Whitefield had violated the first rule of merchandizing: to know one's merchandize and the market in which it was sold. Habersham agreed to help Whitefield recover, provided the young man changed his way of doing business, especially the mix of goods in his inventory. In a newspaper advertisement two months after he closed his first shop, Whitefield announced that he had "opened a Small Retail Shop in Johnson's Square," on property "belonging to Col. Francis Harris, and lately possess'd by the Hon. James Habersham, Esq." The nature of the new establishment reflected Habersham's prudent management style. Instead of offering jewelry and other baubles that languished in the Savannah market, Whitefield now sold an assortment of goods in hot demand: cloth, including "Cheques, Oznaburgs, Stripes, and Callicoes"; clothing, including "ready made Mens and Boys Fustian Coats, Sailors Great Coats, Jackets, and Frocks, Shirts, Trousers, and Hats"; and drink, including the "best, old West-India and Northward Rum, Wine, etc."[16]

Harris & Habersham profited in large part because the partners were adept in carrying an inventory that met consumer needs. Thus, they carried an assortment of merchandise in the right quantities to satisfy demand without incurring unnecessary carrying costs. They knew that if they ordered too many of an item, their shelves would be piled high with merchandise that would not sell but that must be paid for. If they ordered too few, they would miss the opportunity for sales and profits. Because of a lag time of six to nine months or more between the time the merchant wrote the order in Savannah and the time the goods actually arrived, Habersham and Harris had to make educated guesses about such variables as future supplies on hand, demand for seasonal goods such as winter coats, and the actual date that the goods would arrive from London via Charlestown.

To understand how Harris & Habersham operated, it would be enlightening to examine the enterprise from within, that is, by looking at its business records. Unfortunately, only scraps of those account books have survived. However, we know much about the firm's operations from the much more extensive records of a successor company. By the mid-1750s, both James Habersham and Francis Harris had decided to leave their countinghouse for country estates, investing their very substantial profits in rice plantations. But they did not leave the world of commerce entirely—they kept their hands in importing and exporting firms as investors and consultants. The first mercantile business they helped launch was that of Thomas

Rasberry and Company. In particular, Habersham and Harris provided start-up capital for Rasberry, who had arrived in Georgia in 1751 or 1752. Moreover, they introduced him to their customers and suppliers and offered business advice gleaned from their dozen years as Savannah's leading merchants. Though a "silent partner," Habersham remained very much aware of the successor company's operations. For one thing, he shipped his rice through Rasberry and Company, and he placed substantial orders for English manufactured imports. No doubt he also was free with his advice and criticism. Thus, it is safe to surmise that Rasberry and Company operated substantially the same way that Harris & Habersham had. Certainly as we examine the new firm's records we see familiar names of customers and suppliers that had been important to the parent company. We turn then to a close examination of operations at Rasberry and Company.

Thomas Rasberry's business correspondence helps us understand the challenges facing Harris & Habersham in ordering goods from London suppliers. In a typical order dated June 29, 1759, Thomas Rasberry sent his London correspondent William Thomson an order with about three hundred separate line items, no doubt very similar to the orders Harris & Habersham placed. The list began with "800 yards white Edinburghs" and ended with "mens coarse Lawn Handkerchiefs with striped border."[17] For many of the items, Rasberry listed a specific price at which he desired the items to be bought. He had explained that practice in an earlier order: "I have, as youl notice, affixed the Prices to most of the Goods, . . . which is not intended to confine you intirely to those identical Prices, but only, where they cannot be had at such Rates that you would come as near them as possible."[18] In other words, he wanted Thomson to be cost conscious and wanted to make him aware that he, Rasberry, knew what was a good price for the goods he ordered.

Rasberry's instructions to Thomson went beyond specifying prices. Throughout the order he commented on individual items. For instance, for an order for cotton gowns, he added: "youl please to take Care that the Stripes of all the abouve 24 Gowns run the length way of the Cloth." One can only wonder if that note resulted from angry customers who had expressed disappointment with Rasberry's earlier selections. For an order for India chintz, he explained that "All the foregoing (except the 18 yard Callicoes) are Patterns for Womens Gowns and as a great deal depends on the livelyness of their Colours and handsomeness of their Patterns I should be greatly obliged to you to get any Gentlewoman of your Acquaintance to chuse them before they are put up." His concern was that the merchandise

would meet local demand. For an order for fans, Rasberry added, "Please order the above Fans to be chiefly Landscapes as the India Mounts are not well liked here." He also sought variety in his assortments. He specified that in an order for two dozen "womens stuff damask" pumps, "let one doz of these be round Toes and none black."[19]

Savannah merchants sometimes ordered custom-made goods, usually for themselves, their best customers, or influential members of the community. In one such instance, Rasberry gave Thomson precise specifications for a gun. In August 1759 he ordered "1 Fowling Piece not to exceed 3 feet 6 Inches length of the Barrel plain Walnut Stock with plain brass Mounting a whale bone rammer and one of the newest fashion waterpan bridle Locks NB this Piece must be warranted to throw its load of swan shott into the Circumference of a rum Puncheon head [i.e., a barrel lid used as a target] at 80 yards distance If such a gun can be had that will answer this discription particularly in respect to the Carriage of the shott, the Cost will not be regarded & no other piece but one that will perform this will do."[20] From his instructions, it is clear that Rasberry wished to satisfy an important customer's request and, in fulfilling it, perhaps strengthen a friendship, impress a potential customer, satisfy an existing patron, or extend a favor that could be traded for future influence or services. Whatever reason, Rasberry took special orders and gave them his personal attention. He made certain that Josiah Smith knew, for instance, that some brass "Bolts are for Mr Habersham" and alerted him to watch for "a Garden Stone Roller & Frame marked J H No 1 a[nd] 2 from on board the Squerries."[21]

Ordering goods at a distance was a challenge for import merchants such as Habersham and Harris. Three thousand miles from their London suppliers, they had to rely on their correspondents to fill orders. Habersham stated the difficulty in a letter to one correspondent: "Upon the whole there is no directing from this Distance. In London you may have anything the Nation may furnish, and we must leave the choice of the Cloth . . . to you." In order to ensure good quality, Habersham suggested to his London buyer an incentive for superior workmanship: "Perhaps you may do well to give a Pot of Porter extraordinary pr suit to have them sewed strong."[22] Being familiar with London artisans, Habersham was betting that a bit of wine would attract special attention to his order.

As hard as Habersham and Harris worked to satisfy their customers, the partners strove to establish solid relations with their suppliers. Building on goodwill that he had developed with Charlestown merchants during his

time at Bethesda, Habersham assumed the role of purchasing agent for the firm. Indeed, one of Harris & Habersham's early suppliers was Robert Pringle, who had allowed Habersham to buy goods on credit for the orphanage. Pringle had conducted a brisk trade with Savannah merchants since the late 1730s, primarily in the provisioning trade, and was well acquainted with the Georgia market. For at least six years before opening an account with Habersham, Pringle had sold goods to the trustees' store and to private merchants such as Coleman Salomons and Abraham Minis.

Habersham knew that sound credit was the keystone of the relationship between merchant and supplier. He also was aware that Harris & Habersham would have to overcome the poor credit records Georgia merchants had established, prompting dunning letters from impatient and frustrated creditors. Savannah merchant Nicholas Rigby, for example, incurred Pringle's disfavor by failing to pay for merchandise on time. In a letter dated November 4, 1743, about the time Habersham and Harris began their business, Pringle demanded that Rigby pay his past-due bills. What particularly rankled the Charlestown merchant was the fact that he had advanced a shipment of sugar "out-of-pocket," that is, he had paid for the sugar with his own money and sold it to Rigby with the expectation that Rigby would reimburse him by a specified time. Pringle's liberality indicated his desire to encourage someone who was opening what could be a mutually profitable relationship. He was put off, however, when Rigby, instead of making a timely remittance, suggested that Pringle convert the advance into an interest-bearing note. In rejecting that idea, Pringle lectured the young trader on the importance of ready cash to a colonial merchant: "As to allowing me Interest, [I] think it is no Equivalent, and had much Rather have my Money, even at 10 per cent as is Customary here much less at 5 per cent as it is with you."[23] Two months later, Pringle again wrote Rigby demanding repayment. "I was in Great Hopes of a Remittance . . . by this Conveyance," he wrote, "it being now near Six Months since you had the Goods and you assur'd me you woud make Returns for Same at most in three or four Months, especially did [I] at Least Expect you would have Reimburs'd me for the Cash I advanced out of Pockett for the Sugar sent you." He expressed his hopes that Rigby would soon "make Remittance for your whole Account, and as it is the first of our Dealing was in hopes you would have been Punctual in Order to have Encourag'd a further Correspondance."[24] In other words, Rigby's failure to pay on time called into question their entire business relationship.

Within the first year of their trading business, Habersham and Harris had won the respect of prominent Charlestown merchants by paying their bills on time. One of those merchants was Robert Pringle, who gave Habersham high marks, contrasting his debt management with that of the improvident Nicholas Rigby. In one of his letters to Rigby, Pringle complimented Harris & Habersham for keeping its account current. Holding that firm up as an example to Rigby, Pringle noted that Harris and Habersham "from your Place are very Punctual in their Returns and have Established a Very Good Credit in this Place, and money can be no Scarcer to you than to them."[25] A good credit rating meant everything in mid-eighteenth-century commerce. With a chronic cash shortage, the engine of exchange was credit, flowing in the first instance from London mercantile houses and extending through their colonial correspondents to colonial consumers. Those along the line who failed to meet their obligations risked losing their place. Those with reliable payment records could count on an uninterrupted flow of goods. From their first months in business, Habersham and Harris took care to establish themselves as creditworthy and dependable, both to suppliers looking for prompt payment and to customers looking for well-stocked shelves.

Harris & Habersham enjoyed strong business relations with a number of Charlestown merchants, in addition to Robert Pringle. Two relationships became especially important to the Savannah merchants in their efforts to become the first Georgia traders to exchange goods directly with London. In the 1740s and 1750s Henry Laurens earned a reputation as one of Charlestown's leading traders. The range of his services illustrates his value to his colonial customers. He purchased staples from Carolina and Georgia planters and Indian traders and sold them in London through his correspondent, James Croakatt. Acquiring commodities for overseas sales was but the first in a chain of activities required in making an overseas sale. Laurens undertook the responsibility for having the commodities weighed, packed in barrels, stored in warehouses until a ship was ready to sail, loaded onto the vessel, insured against loss at sea, and properly registered, along with paying any duties levied on the export. For his efforts, he charged a commission that, for the most part, was a flat 5 percent of the value of the goods shipped. Laurens also imported manufactured goods from Croakatt and sold them at wholesale and retail in Carolina and Georgia. Harris & Habersham relied on Laurens for much of the merchandise in its Savannah store. Frequently, Habersham sent the schooner up to Charlestown for a load of merchandise. Laurens's "Waste Book" reveals some of the items

Harris & Habersham purchased in large quantities, an assortment ranging from Irish linen to nails and Madeira wine. Even after Harris & Habersham opened a direct correspondence with a London merchant, it continued to purchase items from Laurens and his partner, George Austin.[26]

John Nickleson was another Charlestown merchant who played a significant role in Harris & Habersham's pioneering mercantile enterprise. In partnership with two brothers, Richard and Thomas Shubrick, Nickleson amassed enough capital in overseas trade to leave the colony in 1747 and establish himself as a London merchant, one of the most successful in the Carolina trade. While King George's War (1740–48) was devastating to many of Charlestown's merchants, it proved to be a boon for Nickleson & Shubrick. Through influence with the government at Whitehall, the firm secured the profitable appointment as "agents victuallers" for the Royal Navy ships stationed at Charlestown harbor. With profits from its general mercantile operations as well as that from being naval suppliers, Nickleson & Shubrick became a major transoceanic company, with operations on both sides of the Atlantic.[27] Harris & Habersham became one of its valued customers.

In just five years, Habersham and Harris had built a very profitable business, and they had done it by forging strong ties with suppliers and merchants as well as paying close attention to the myriad details of operating a mercantile business. However, by 1747, the partners had reached the limits of their ability to increase profits. Georgia's population dwindled, and trade was stagnant. Few wished to settle in a colony where surplus crops available for export were almost nonexistent and imports were frightfully expensive. Both problems stemmed from Georgia's lack of direct trade with London. Until Georgians could ship and receive goods directly through their own port and thus avoid the high costs associated with the Savannah-to-Charlestown link, they would continue to struggle with dim prospects for reversing their fortunes.

Direct Overseas Trade

In order for Harris & Habersham to grow and increase its profits, the firm had to become competitive with Charlestown's merchants, which meant providing Georgians an opportunity of shipping their produce to English and European markets directly from Savannah and landing London manufactured goods there without incurring Charlestown's high reshipment charges. From the colony's beginning, Charlestown had been the principal port for exporting Georgians' surpluses as well as the entrepôt for consumer

goods. If Harris & Habersham were to capture any of that business, the partners had to be able to compete in the three markets available to Georgian planters: the Indian trade, the West Indian market, and direct trade with London. To succeed, they had to offer Indian traders and Georgia planters competitive prices for their skins and crops, ship that produce to the British West Indies or London at low costs, and bring back to Savannah merchandise and provisions at prices comparable to those quoted at Charlestown. If Harris & Habersham succeeded, the principals would realize huge profits, and Georgia would become a much more inviting place to settle. If the company failed, its future and Georgia's survival would be further compromised.

Accordingly, the firm devised a business strategy to enter the export trade, a plan Habersham said was designed "to engage in a direct Trade both with England and the West Indies and especially to introduce something in the Indian Trade." In a letter to the trustees he explained his plan:

> We proposed hereby to have an opportunity of Shipping what Deer Skins and Indicoe might offer from this Port [Savannah] instead of sending them to Carolina, of making an opening in Exportation and a Market for what Rice could be spared and We suppose the following Year We might be able to get Rice &c. to load a Ship wholly and as Boards Scantling Shingles and Staves. Corn Pease, and Live Stock are the principal articles from these parts to the West Indies with a little Rice, We likewise proposed to keep a Sloop constantly running in that Trade.[28]

Habersham and Harris set their plan in motion in 1746 when Harris traveled to London to "settle a Correspondence there, and import Goods here more advantageously than they can be had at Charles Town."[29] Harris negotiated a trading relationship with the mercantile house operated by former Charlestown merchant John Nickleson. Nickleson, part of the "Carolina Trade," was a good choice because he knew from firsthand experience the problems facing colonial merchants operating in South Carolina and Georgia. He understood the region's demand for manufactured goods, and he was aware of the production and shipping cycles for exporting indigo, rice, and deerskins.

Having secured a London correspondent, Harris and Habersham chartered a "small Ship" to arrive during the winter of 1749–50. As Habersham explained to Benjamin Martyn and the trustees, the goal was to enable Georgians to load their "Rice Deer Skins some Staves and what else" they

have to export and ship those commodities directly to market. Echoing concerns about indirect trade, Habersham wrote, "We find so many inconveniences and charges attending our doing business from England and other parts by way of Charlestown, that unless we can fall on some method to introduce Shipping here we shall never do anything to purpose." He pointed out the historical significance of the occasion: "This we believe is the first Ship ever charter'd to this Colony with a Design to be loaded with its produce for England."[30]

Habersham knew that the port of Savannah was ill equipped for overseas shipping, so he turned his attention to making it suitable. He petitioned the Georgia president and assistants for the right to construct a wharf and warehouses sufficient to handle transatlantic trade. Without more efficient facilities for handling and storing imports and exports, Habersham questioned whether transatlantic shipping from Savannah would be profitable. He explained how the present setup thwarted future trade: "cumbersome Commodities such as Lumber &c; which if brought up and stowed on the Bluff would be attended with such an Expence, as would make them too dear for any foreign Markett." Rather than simply building a new crane to hoist and lower goods between the top of the bluff and the river, Habersham proposed to construct a larger wharf at river level with warehouses large enough for amassing and storing bulky commodities such as "Rice, Staves, Sassafrass and such other Articles." Planters would be able to ship their produce downriver to Savannah, offload at the company's wharf, and store their commodities in the warehouse until an oceangoing vessel arrived. When ships from London pulled alongside the wharf, stevedores could offload the imported merchandise into the Harris & Habersham warehouse and then reload the vessel with Georgia produce already weighed, packed, and staged for shipment. With better facilities, the merchants hoped to lower planters' shipping and handling costs and thereby make profitable the production of commodities for overseas markets. Habersham succeeded in making his case, as the assistants were convinced that the proposed structure would "conduce much to the Ease and Cheapness of Exporting all heavy and cumbersome Commodities such as Lumber." Believing that "it is a Duty incumbent on this Board to encourage Trade and find out the easiest and cheapest Manner for exporting its native Commodities," the magistrates voted unanimously to recommend that the trustees approve the petition.[31] No doubt the fact that Harris & Habersham would build the wharf at its own expense made the officials' approval easier. Habersham reported that

the firm invested about eight hundred pounds sterling of its own money in the Savannah wharf, warehouses, and stores.[32] With the wharf approved and under construction, the merchants awaited the chartered ship.

But, alas, even before the vessel arrived in late 1749, Habersham knew that he would not be able to procure enough goods from Georgia planters to fill the ship and thus cover the cost of the charter. He and Harris faced the prospects of having laid out money for a ship with little to haul back to England, certainly not enough to pay the freight. Habersham explained their predicament: "We are obliged to pay the same as tho' we had loaded her." He added: "We have no pitch or Tar, and must Load her with Rice except some Deer Skins and Indicoe which tho' very valuable go but a little way in filling a Vessel and Staves shipped to England are only Dunnage and as We don't expect to get one fourth or at most one third of the loading of Rice here, We must purchase the remainder in Carolina with Cash."[33] Thus, Harris & Habersham's initial overseas shipment, undertaken at great expense, was unprofitable. Ironically, their venture was designed to make Georgians independent of Charlestown but revealed just how dependent they were on their neighbors. Moreover, Habersham recognized that future charters were likely to fail as well, unless Georgians could solve the problem of anemic production.

Though disappointed in the short-term results, Habersham saw a silver lining. He reasoned that even if the first effort in direct trade resulted in a loss for Harris & Habersham, "yet as some of the Inhabitants will have some opportunity of disposing of it to advantage," the venture would be worthwhile. He believed it was "absolutely necessary to make an Introduction in this Channel" [i.e., direct trade] to prevent depopulation. He added that he and Harris were reluctant pioneers in overseas trade, musing that "if there were any persons now in the Colony whose Business led them to open Trade with England we shou'd rather choose they wou'd do it as we are sensible the first adventurers will be subject to many difficulties and Losses." He concluded with a grave warning: "unless this can be accomplished which will be a great means of introducing something of the Indian Trade, of giving the Planters Spirit, and the Colony Credit, We can by no means think of staying here."[34]

Habersham's Economic Development Plan

Habersham realized that his business plan addressed only part of the challenge facing Georgians. It sought to lower shipping costs between Savan-

nah and London, but it did nothing to bolster production on farms and plantations. And until surpluses were produced in quantities sufficient to fill the holds of ships, Harris & Habersham could expect little return on its investment. Pondering the problem as he awaited the charter's arrival from London, Habersham turned his thoughts to an economic development plan that would make Georgia competitive in the Atlantic market. At first, he simply discussed his ideas with close friends, such as John Bolzius at Ebenezer. Habersham told Bolzius that the trustees' economic policies, especially that of banning slave labor, must be changed in order for Georgians to compete. That's not what Bolzius wanted to hear. No one had been more supportive of the trustees than the leader of the Salzburgers, who continued to favor white laborers to slaves. However, recent setbacks in the Germans' trade with the West Indies because of high freight rates made him, too, wonder about the colony's economic future. In addition, he had great respect for Habersham, who on several occasions had lent his people money and had helped them ship their goods to market.

Though Bolzius disagreed with Habersham's advocacy of slave labor, he trusted his friend as an honest, diligent, and competent merchant who had Georgia's best interests at heart. Accordingly, he encouraged Habersham to put his thoughts on paper and assured him that he would forward the remarks to the trustees. No settler enjoyed greater respect among the trustees than did Bolzius, and if he valued Habersham's insight, the trustees would give the comments serious consideration. Thus, in 1747, Habersham drafted his economic development plan.

He began by considering why his initiative to open direct trade with London failed. In a moment of painful reflection, he explained that "we have suffered very much in our Attempts to introduce Navigation, which is principally oweing to our [i.e., Georgia's] Situation." He spelled out the problem: "Many of our Planters are but yet young Setlers, and have Barns and Conveniences to build, and as they are in general, but weak handed, they are late and uncertain in getting out their Crops, which prevents our getting their Commodities to an early, and consequently to an advantagious Market." With low crop production and late shipments to market, merchants could not compete successfully in overseas markets.[35]

The backdrop for his analysis was grim. In a nutshell, Georgia in the late 1740s was in a state of deterioration. A 1751 report on the "present State and Condition" of Georgia showed a population of just 1,735 white people, about the same number of residents as reported in 1740 and less than 5 percent of South Carolina's white population. Moreover, both Bolzius and

Habersham reported that settlers were daily leaving the province. Exports stood at a paltry level, barely more than the commodities shipped out in 1740 and only about 1 percent of South Carolina's exports. And Georgia remained a tiny market for English goods, importing a volume of goods valued at less than 2 percent of that purchased by South Carolinians. Anticipating that their neighbor to the south would not survive and would soon become a part of Carolina, some South Carolina planters had moved into Georgia, had taken prime rice-growing land, and, in defiance of the trustees, brought their slaves to cultivate the grain. Georgia's magistrates reported the violations but lacked the means or will to curb them.

While other Georgians understood the fragility of the colony's economy, none discussed it with Habersham's clarity, nor did anyone else offer such a clear plan for strengthening it. Increasingly, the trustees, echoing complaints Bolzius and Habersham had voiced, grew frustrated with the lack of vision and energy from the president and assistants in Savannah. Habersham expressed his fear that the trustees had "been sadly misled" by official reports on the state of the colony, reports that were inaccurate and calculated more to maintain the government than to promote economic development. The trustees' secretary, Benjamin Martyn, remarked on the inadequate correspondence from President William Stephens: too many "Omissions" and insufficient "Exactness."[36]

In sharp contrast to vague, misleading, and incomplete official reports, the trustees received in 1747 James Habersham's crisp analysis of Georgia's economy, with his specific, straightforward, and commonsense proposals for putting it on a sound foundation. Based on his experience as a merchant, Habersham's report expressed a clear understanding of market realities and provided concrete examples based on actual commercial transactions. Void of flattery and condemnation, it set forth in indisputable terms the two interrelated problems facing Georgians: the lack of large surpluses for export because of too few laborers and too high labor costs, and the absence of competitive freight costs resulting from low production. Habersham did more than discuss problems; he offered solutions that made sense. In short, his plan called for radical change, requiring the trustees to abandon their original scheme and put the colony on another footing.[37]

Unlike the Malcontents and other critics, Habersham did not blame the colony's "deplorable" condition on the trustees' policies, especially those denying the use of slaves. The problem, he argued, was not "the want of Labourers" but rather the "want of a Markett" for their produce. Neither

planter nor merchant could survive in a colony that has no reasonable access to a market to reward the industry of its inhabitants. No one worked harder than the Salzburgers at Ebenezer, but they, too, had failed to produce a profitable export. The reason, according to Habersham, lay in market realities. Markets in the Atlantic world rewarded those who produced commodities that were in demand, at competitive costs, and in sufficient quantities to absorb all shipping, marketing, and financing charges. Sugar planters in the British West Indies, tobacco growers in the Chesapeake, and rice producers in South Carolina all made profits with their exports. But Georgians had not by the mid-1740s found such a profitable staple, nor had they discovered ways of producing and shipping their surpluses at competitive costs. The problem, Habersham explained, was that English merchants were unwilling to send ships to Savannah in order to load them with small quantities of miscellaneous goods that, when sold in the West Indies or in England, generated too little revenue to cover the freight. How Georgians could attract shippers, then, depended on their ability to produce a staple at low costs and in large quantities. Then, when sold in a distant market, such a commodity would not only command a sale sufficient to cover its own freight, but it would greatly lower overall cargo rates, thus enabling even small farmers to ship their tiny surpluses at a profit. In that scenario, Georgia would flourish because inhabitants, encouraged by prospects for cash income, would remain in the colony. Thus, rather than blasting Georgians as lazy and unproductive, as the Malcontents had done, Habersham focused on the "Want of a Markett" as the major reason for Georgia's low productivity. Given access to a good market, he reasoned, settlers would produce commodities in abundance.[38]

Habersham next turned to the question of production. Conceding that he was not a farmer, he was reluctant to represent himself as an expert on the production of commodities. However, he did understand that Georgians needed to produce goods that satisfied distant markets. For the West Indies, he believed that Georgia could become a major exporter of provisions (corn, peas, beef, and pork) and forest products (lumber, shingles, pitch, and tar). And for England and Europe, he thought that rice and indigo, South Carolina's staples, would meet with a profitable market.[39]

Having identified exportable staples, Habersham addressed the question of how best to produce them. Although an advocate of small producers, he knew that the colony's best hope lay in the large-scale production of exportable commodities. Only when Georgians could fill the holds of sea-

going vessels would transportation costs come down and enable the yeoman farmer to get his surplus to market at a profit. Habersham's model for high-volume production was South Carolina. He knew that rice and indigo would flourish in Georgia as they had in the neighboring colony, and he knew that they were very profitable. The key was labor. Like the Malcontents, Habersham believed that slave labor was the best solution, but he did not dogmatize on that point. Indeed, he stated his preference for a colony of yeoman farmers, industrious men and women who owned and worked small farms like those that made Ebenezer a model. However, they could not compete with large Carolina planters and their slave labor. Habersham suggested, alternatively, that large numbers of indentured servants could possibly provide the necessary labor, but he was skeptical, pointing out that for fifteen years the colony had failed to attract them in sufficient numbers. Though aware of the trustees' many reaffirmations of the ban on slavery, Habersham concluded that slave labor was necessary to rescue Georgia. He expressed his regret that only recently the trustees had again disallowed "the use of Negroes, and was sorry to hear they had wrote so warmly against them."[40]

In making his case, he offered a personal example in the profitability of slave-produced crops. Habersham noted the sharp contrast between the productivity in South Carolina and that in Georgia. After his fruitless attempts to make Bethesda a profitable plantation, he commented that Whitefield was ready to give up. Habersham recalled, "I advised him . . . to make no farther attempts in Georgia, for that it was actually sinking money in such a mad and foolish way." At Habersham's urging, followers of Whitefield and Jonathan and Hugh Bryan "raised a subscription and purchased a fine plantation [in South Carolina] and a few Negroes in that colony."[41] In a letter to the trustees, Whitefield reported that with only "eight working hands, . . . there will be more raised in one year, and with a quarter of the expence, than has been produced at Bethesda for several years last past." He added, "had a negroe been allowed, I should now have had a sufficiency to support a great many orphans, without expending above half the sum which hath been laid out." Whitefield closed by expressing a sentiment that Habersham shared: "Georgia never can or will be a flourishing province without negroes are allowed."[42]

On May 16, 1749, the Georgia trustees officially decided to repeal the act prohibiting slaves in the colony. Although it would be misleading to attribute that policy change to Habersham's influential economic development plan, it would be equally erroneous to dismiss his role. He had made a com-

pelling case for reviving Georgia's economy through a series of measures including the use of slave labor. Unlike Stephens and the assistants, Habersham was a credible reporter in that his enterprising efforts had made him Georgia's wealthiest inhabitant, and his investments held promise for the colony's commerce. His report did not tell the trustees what they wanted to hear; rather, it was a clear, reasonable account backed by evidence gleaned from firsthand experience.

No doubt the trustees were also influenced when John Bolzius softened his opposition to the introduction of slaves. In a letter sent to the trustees about the same time they received Habersham's plan, the Ebenezer pastor repeated his preference for a "Colony settled with white Inhabitants," but he also expressed his frustration in finding "some profitable business." Habersham had assisted the Germans in exporting their lumber, but high shipping costs eroded their profits. Further, he noted that "the Carolinians will out do us always with their Negroes, tho' we were assisted by industrious servants." Against that bleak prospect, Bolzius acquiesced in Habersham's call for slave labor. He signaled the trustees: "If their Honours are pleased to comply with the supplications and desires of other Colonists for introducing Negroes . . . , we and our friends in Germany will say not a word against it."[43] Armed with the recommendation of the colony's leading merchant and with the acquiescence of its most industrious inhabitants, the trustees reversed the ban on slaves.

Though the pioneering merchant and his partner may have lost money in their initial venture into overseas trade, in the long term their efforts paid off handsomely. Although Habersham's business plan did not produce the profits he hoped for, his economic development plan exceeded his highest expectations. The trustees agreed with Habersham's analysis of the state of Georgia and accepted nearly all his recommendations for expanding production. It could be argued that the trustees were already leaning toward the changes Habersham suggested, but no one had ever made the case so convincingly. With the trustees' adopting his ideas, Habersham expressed optimism in Georgia's prospects. He reminded the trustees that other colonies had struggled in their early years only to flourish later. Pennsylvania, he noted by way of illustration, "which is now perhaps the most populous and flourishing Province in America, was twenty five Years setled before it could be said to thrive."[44] Georgia had good soil, and now that it had a port for overseas trade, it too would prosper.

Habersham would prosper as well, ironically, by returning to the agricul-

tural arena where he had previously failed. After ten years as a successful merchant, Habersham left the countinghouse in the early 1750s for the life of a rice planter. Compared with his earlier experience at Bethesda, this new venture into agriculture looked much brighter. Profits from Harris & Habersham provided the necessary start-up and operating capital. And a fast-growing supply of slaves, in part imported by Habersham himself, ensured low-cost labor. He reckoned that rice would "cost nothing" except for the necessary labor and the "comparatively inconsiderable" expenditures for miscellaneous utensils required in cultivation. He reasoned that labor costs were offset by the fact that slaves are "on the whole an encreasing Interest," meaning that they were assets that multiplied through reproduction and appreciated in market value.[45] Thus, James Habersham the planter saw a bright future for himself and Georgia in large part because James Habersham the merchant had opened new markets, including that of slaves.

More immediately, Habersham benefited from his newfound influence with the trustees by gaining political power. First, in early 1749, the trustees appointed Habersham an assistant, making him one of the most powerful men in Savannah.[46] Second, in July 1750, the trustees appointed him secretary of the colony.[47] In succeeding years, he would become a member of the Council after Georgia became a royal colony; then he would be elevated to the post of president of the Council, and during 1771 and 1772, he would be named acting governor during an extended absence by Governor James Wright.

CHAPTER FOUR

Council House

Assistant and Secretary

James Habersham's political trajectory matched his swift ascent to commercial success. In just seven years he underwent a dramatic metamorphosis from pariah to statesman. On May 10, 1743, Benjamin Martyn, secretary for the Georgia trustees, rebuked Habersham for insulting Christopher Orton, the Anglican priest at Savannah. Writing for the trustees, Martyn told Habersham that it was "indecent" to assault the "Establish'd Minister of the Town." And, by extension, "it was indecent with regard to the Trustees, who thought him a proper Person for that Employment." In other words, by insulting Orton, Habersham had insulted the trustees who appointed him. Martyn expressed the trustees' concern about Habersham's "fiery zeal" and wondered if someone of his temperament should be in charge of children's education. Because of Habersham's actions, the trustees instructed the magistrates to make "frequent Visitations" to Bethesda, and if they found that the boys and girls are educated in an "improper manner," to remove them at once.[1] The message was clear: if Habersham could not govern his own passions, he might not be able to govern the orphans.

Seven years later, Martyn wrote Habersham another letter on behalf of the trustees, but this letter had a much different tone. This time he informed Habersham that the trustees had named him secretary of the colony. Martyn said that the trustees were "extreamly pleas'd" with Habersham and his commercial enterprise, citing his efforts to establish direct trade with London as "Good Examples" that they hoped would have "great Influence" on other Georgians. Habersham, they claimed, had demonstrated that "Habits of Virtue, and Industry may be as easily got, as Habits of Vice and Laziness." People nurture those good habits when they realize "the Sweets of them," that is, when they succeed because of them. Martyn encouraged Habersham to "upon all Occasions, and by all the Means you can, exhort and encourage the Inhabitants" to be industrious in cultivation.

In less than a decade, Habersham had been transformed from a threat to public order into a paragon of virtue and industry worthy of emulation.[2]

Habersham approached public service with the same energy and purpose that he brought to his business affairs. He proved himself to be a loyal councilor, dedicated to making provincial government work more efficiently and fairly for Georgians. He was equally loyal to the Crown by insisting on upholding the British constitution. But his loyalty was not blind. When Georgia's first royal governor subverted that constitution, Habersham led the opposition against him.

Dedicated Public Servant

Habersham responded to his appointment as assistant with ambivalence. In replying to Benjamin Martyn's letter informing him of the trustees' decision, Habersham expressed his "sincere Thanks" for "this instance of their regard and confidence." But he also admitted to some apprehension about taking office as a magistrate, saying "I shall really be at a loss to know how to act." The problem was that he would be joining a body that had been very critical of and even hostile to him. "Some of the Assistants," he wrote, "have misconstrued my Words and Actions, and expressed themselves of me in such unkind Language, that unless they should alter their behaviour it does not appear to me that I can be of any Service to the trustees or Colony by acting with them." Having voiced his misgivings, Habersham assured Martyn that when he took office "nothing in my conduct shall obstruct [the trustees'] intention in appointing me."[3]

Habersham knew that the trustees had read his criticism of the magistrates, including the negative assessment he penned in his paper on Georgia's economy. In that work, he had reported "that the Colony had suffered greatly by the management of persons here," and he added that "no consideration could prevail with me to act with some of these Gentlemen, whose conduct in many things, I cannot approve of." William Stephens was, no doubt, one of those he had in mind. As it turned out, Habersham would have to serve with Stephens for only a short time, because the president of Georgia had also fallen from favor with the trustees, who replaced him with Henry Parker in 1750. Although Habersham believed that bad management had brought the colony to its low state, he thought that good management could lead it to prosperity. Habersham agreed with Bolzius's hope that the

trustees may find persons capable of bringing the Colony into "Credit and Repute." With good management, Georgia could finally fulfill its promise of becoming "not only a comfortable Asylum for many Industrious People but also beneficial to its Mother's Country."[4]

The assistants exercised administrative and judicial, but not legislative, powers. During its trusteeship, Georgia had no resident legislature; the charter vested all lawmaking powers in the trustees sitting in London, and that body elected to retain those rights. To execute its policies and enforce its laws, the trustees relied on a president and a number of assistants sitting in Savannah. Those magistrates had several responsibilities. They processed requests for land grants, although the trustees had to give final approval for any grant. However, the magistrates decided the specific parcel an individual received and ordered the surveys that determined its boundaries. Depending on the survey, the acreage could be more or less arable and, therefore, more or less valuable. The magistrates also served as a court of original jurisdiction, hearing civil and criminal cases, with the trustees having the final say, as in all matters of substance. And the magistrates provided local colonial administration for Georgia, preparing the annual estimate of expenses to maintain public institutions, receiving sola bills and distributing them to public officials and the trustees' indentured servants, overseeing such public works as the trustees' garden for experimenting with various plants that might be suitable for commercial production, encouraging the cultivation of raw silk, and keeping the trustees apprised of the state of the colony and its inhabitants' needs.

Such an arrangement suffered from a major flaw. With few exceptions, the trustees never set foot in Georgia. Based in London, they decided policy on assumptions that frequently proved invalid, and they enacted laws based on magistrates' reports that were often inaccurate, incomplete, and biased. In establishing the system of government, the trustees had assumed that the magistrates would be intelligent, energetic, disinterested public servants who would send thoughtful, informed accounts grounded in sound logic and backed by solid evidence. But, on the balance, the magistrates were not an impressive lot. Consequently, trustee policy was interpreted by personal prejudice rather than detached analysis.

Habersham, however, was well suited to be an assistant. First, he could write, a valuable and rare ability in early Georgia. As a merchant apprentice in London, he had learned the art of business correspondence. Traders,

especially those who operated in global markets, relied on legible, clear, accurate, and complete written instructions to conduct their affairs. Purchase orders, bills of exchange, bills of lading, insurance claims, customs certificates, and other business documents were the paper engines that merchants employed to ship and track goods throughout the world. In Georgia, Habersham's suppliers and customers regarded him as one careful in correspondence and meticulous in record keeping. On occasion he chastised others who failed to write well, once complaining that his son Joseph, who had spent several years at Princeton, still could not write a neat hand. And he scolded Georgia's London agent William Knox for failing to provide a clear paper trail that Habersham could follow in tracing transatlantic exchanges.

Second, Habersham was an optimist. He combined a tough-minded assessment of market realities with a sanguine view of the future. Underlying his confidence was the assumption that all people would bring to a task the same energy, determination, and intelligence with which he invariably approached every challenge. At times his optimism bordered on the Pollyanna. For instance, Habersham continued to promote silk production in Georgia long after it became clear that Georgia's soil and climate were not suited for sericulture.

Third, Habersham was a leader. When the trustees first appointed him as an assistant, he was an outsider. Not only had he earlier run afoul of the magistrates in the incident that landed him in jail, but he was out of step with them concerning economic development. On taking his seat on the Board of Assistants, he called for much more vigorous government leadership in responding to settler initiatives for promoting trade. John Bolzius noted the difference. In a 1747 letter to the trustees, the pastor wondered if the magistrates had "the power & ability, & inclination too, to lead by words & example the industrious people . . . in the Colony in the way of cultivating their Plantations & doing other profitable business."[5] In the same letter, he expressed his opinion that Georgia would become a profitable colony if the trustees had "one or two proper, well qualify'd & disinterested Agents at Savannah . . . to encourage the people in a familiar & convincing way."[6] In another letter, Bolzius recommended Habersham as just the kind of leader who "could be many ways serviceable to their Honours to attain their laudable ends in settling this Province."[7] Bolzius knew that Habersham would exercise his best judgment in public affairs, just as

he did in private business. Moreover, he regarded Habersham as a person of not only "great skill and experience but also energy and courage. He will suppress his opinions to neither his fellow councilmen nor the Lord Trustees regarding the welfare of this country."[8] Unlike previous assistants, Habersham would tell trustees what they should hear about the colony's needs, not necessarily what they wanted to hear.

Fourth, Habersham was loyal to the trustees, conceiving of colonization as a joint venture between private and public interests. As one who subscribed to the goals and laws of commercial capitalism, he looked first to the market for capital and profits. But that commitment did not mean unfettered private enterprise in free markets. He also believed that the capital requirements and start-up costs of a new colony were too great for individuals to bear alone, and therefore he supported a partnership between settlers and government. His notions are best seen in his 1747 economic development plan, which called for planters to direct their capital and labor toward producing such commodities as rice, indigo, and cotton while at the same time urging the trustees to support their endeavors by upgrading the port of Savannah's infrastructure and offering production bounties to encourage agricultural production.

Habersham quickly proved himself to be a diligent, conscientious, and honest public servant. In recognition of his first year's performance, the trustees rewarded Habersham with the additional office of secretary of the colony, whose primary responsibility was to provide the trustees with timely, accurate reports on the state of affairs in Georgia. Prior to joining the Board of Assistants, Habersham had been very critical of the magistrates' reporting. Unlike many inhabitants, including the Malcontents, Habersham said that he did "not blame the Trustees for every misconduct here—They have been sadly misled." He expressed his view that the trustees had continued to enforce misguided policies because they had been obliged "to hear with the Ears and see with the Eyes of their Correspondents here, who if I may be allowed to Judge, are no ways calculated to answer the important ends of such a correspondence." In other words, the trustees had based their policies on bad information. Now the trustees turned to Habersham to supply them with sound information. On learning of his appointment as secretary, Habersham expressed to the trustees his "unfeigned Thanks for the special Testimony of their regard for, and Confidence in me." In characteristic self-effacement, he added that the job

required someone with an "abler Head, than I am Master of, to execute the important Trust." But he pledged that he would strive with "unwearied Zeal" to become "Instrumental in promoting the Interest of this Colony."[9]

The trustees found his prompt, thorough, frequent, clear, direct reports a refreshing change from those of William Stephens. In the late 1740s near the end of Stephens's tenure, the aging president had frustrated the trustees by failing to provide information they deemed important, such as South Carolina slaveholders' violation of Georgia's prohibition of the introduction of slaves. By contrast, Habersham transmitted full accounts of the colony's agriculture and trade, buttressed by statistics showing production and shipments over time. The volume of Habersham's letters to the trustees indicates that the post of secretary was no sinecure. In addition to the many specific reports on population and economics, he sent letters to the governing body on the average of one every two or three weeks. Considering the enormous volume of correspondence he maintained as a merchant, Habersham spent many hours at the writing table. For his efforts, he received an annual salary of fifty pounds, an amount he regarded as insignificant in comparison to what he earned in his business and insufficient to entice others to consider government service.

Public Service and Private Gain

On joining the Board of Assistants, Habersham made an immediate difference, especially in matters directly relating to economic enterprise. Assistants could help inhabitants become productive citizens in three major ways. First, they granted land, and the quality of the land determined in large part how profitable a planter's operation might be. Many settlers had complained about their particular land grants, claiming that the assistants made little effort to ensure that each grant contained some arable land. Second, assistants could initiate or approve projects that would lessen the costs of shipping goods from plantations to the port at Savannah. The board members before Habersham had been slow to recognize the importance of infrastructure, such as wharves and warehouses, in helping planters become more competitive in getting their commodities to market. Third, the assistants could encourage agricultural production of trustee-approved commodities such as silk by providing incentives, education, and capital equipment. In all these undertakings, Habersham brought a fresh insight and new energy.

The Board of Assistants allocated land according to policies the trustees promulgated in 1742. The minimum land grant was fifty acres, and the maximum was five hundred. The old land tenure proviso of strict tail male had been lifted so that grants could now be passed on to wives and daughters upon the grantee's death. The amount of land any one holder could amass through inheritance or marriage was set at two thousand acres. In parceling out land, the assistants made grants conditional upon the landholder's capability of cultivating and planting a certain number of acres per year in order to discourage absentee ownership. A five-hundred-acre land grant carried with it the requirement of clearing fifty acres within the first ten years and planting a hundred white mulberry trees for every fifty acres cleared.

In executing the land policy, the president and board designated each Tuesday as Land Day. At that time, petitioners appeared before the board and usually requested land in a particular location based on their having heard about desirable tracts and perhaps after they had walked over the site. John Bolzius serves as a good example of one seeking a grant. He had been critical of allotments made to the Salzburgers in the past and was delighted to see Habersham on the board. In mid-1750, Bolzius noted, "various improvements have been made since Mr. Habersham joined the Council, and several ineffectual and tedious people have been dismissed from their public offices." The pastor offered this assessment: "our friend, Mr. Habersham, is a capable and hardworking man, who is eager and willing to serve our Lord Trustees and the colony as a member of the Council and the entire society in this country." He improved the Council's efficiency in granting land, thus reducing some of the frustrating delays hopeful landowners had experienced in the past. Bolzius said that Habersham "made arrangements for the old and new colonists to acquire their land as quickly as possible." Moreover, he introduced an element of fairness in a process that had always favored the assistants and their friends. Bolzius remarked that now new as well as old settlers could expect allotments "in such places and in such ways as pleases them best."[10]

Bolzius and others had complained about surveying methods that often resulted in their receiving substandard land. The Salzburger pastor had registered his objections in letters to the Council and had petitioned for a fairer approach. He said that the custom was for the surveyor to "make one main line" and follow it in surveying plantations, one after the other. The result was that because the surveyor ignored land features and soil quality, much of the land turned out to be "almost entirely unusable." The poor, in par-

ticular, suffered because they received only small plots and could ill afford to lose productivity to "worthless and unusable" land. Bolzius thought that if "a person receives only forty acres, . . . all or most of it should be good, but this seldom happens." Now with his friend Habersham on the Council, who was sensitive to the plight of small producers, things changed. "This time," Bolzius wrote in his journal, the land "has been surveyed as our people wish." When the Council granted land to Bolzius later in 1750, Habersham informed Bolzius that he had personally been out to the plantation and had engaged a surveyor to fix the property lines. He asked Bolzius to accompany him to the property to make sure that the lines were run according to Salzburgers' wishes, but the latter declined because of personal illness, adding that "I trust in his honesty and frienship, and I am sure that he will have my best interests at heart."[11] Thus, Habersham proved to be a friend of hard-working Georgia farmers by introducing common sense and fairness in allotting land and making sure that grantees received usable acreage.

Habersham also helped farmers get their commodities to market. Two years after an unsuccessful petition to the Council to build a wharf, Bolzius tried again in early 1750. This time, with Habersham's support, Bolzius was able to get Council approval to erect a wharf for offloading the Salzburgers' lumber and wood products. He petitioned for a fifty-foot site next to the watch house along the Savannah River, which would provide enough space for a warehouse to store the commodities until loaded on ships for export. He expressed his delight that the Council voted to provide "not fifty but eighty feet, indeed, at the place most convenient and safest because of the watch." What a change in attitude and results! Regarding the location of the new facility, Bolzius observed with delight, "Messrs. Habersham and Harris have their wharf next to it."[12]

In addition to making land allocation rational and improving shipping facilities, Habersham infused new energy into silk production. His diary entries for 1751 record his optimistic reports on the progress of sericulture. After fifteen years of parliamentary subsidies, the annual amount of silk Georgians shipped to England remained at a paltry level. As one of two newly appointed supervisors of silk production, Habersham was determined to make it a success. One of his first entries recorded the long-awaited completion of the filature, a building constructed in Savannah for storing and sorting cocoons and reeling silk from them. He stated that the commencement of production in the new facility "must give every well

wisher of this Culture, I may say of the Colony, a most ravishing pleasure." Aware of the many negative reports reaching England about Georgia's economy, he clearly was trying to put the most optimistic interpretation on silk production. He referred to the first day's output of spun silk as a "Prodigious Quantity," an amount that "would almost have been incredible to me, if I had not weighed the Silk." In fact, the yield from the five women reelers was a little over twenty ounces avoirdupois.[13] In making projections for Harris & Habersham, Habersham was the wary merchant who checked his optimism with frequent reminders that his forecasts could be upset by bad weather, political intrigue, or market swings. But here, he was unbridled in his enthusiasm, writing more like a civic booster than a businessman.

Habersham knew that the filature's initial output was modest, but he hoped that it would provide encouragement not only to the trustees but also to skeptics in Parliament who alone could provide the capital necessary to encourage silk production on a large scale. Casting the account in imperial light, he noted that "tho' I am of no Service in Ordering about the Reeling Part, yet I could not keep away, hardly half an hour for two Days past, occasioned by the inexpressible Satisfaction I received in Seeing a Work, not to be seen in any part of his Majesty's Dominions." He expressed his wish that the "unbelieving Gentlemen" in England who were skeptical of Georgia's ever becoming a significant silk producer could see the filature. Maybe then they would "think it their Duty to nurse and encourage the Culture of so beneficial a plant."[14]

More than trying to impress members of Parliament, Habersham wanted to convince other Georgians that silk production was in their best interests. With delight then, he recorded in his diary that "we have dayly a Number of Spectators at the Filature." If those visitors were as taken with the operation as Habersham, surely great things would come from the enterprise. He saw the filature as a beehive of labor, a place where healthy competition among the reelers represented a worthy object lesson for other Georgians. He observed that "the Filature . . . raises a Spirit of Emulation in the reelers to exceed each other in goodness of their work." He thought that if the workers labored in private, however, separated from each other, they would lose the benefits of healthy competition. Habersham also claimed that the filature's influence on Georgians' industry extended beyond its walls. He said that it "raised such a Spirit in our Planters to forward this Culture, that I believe there will be no necessity to perswade them to Compleat their Quota of Mulberry Trees." He hoped to see dramatic

changes in Georgia's overall work ethic after another season of silk production. Then, he imagined, industry would become the fashion among Georgians. And they would have the satisfaction of producing something beneficial to the British Empire, whose market could never be "Overstock'd with Silk."[15] He opined that once Georgians proved themselves industrious in sericulture, they could profitably grow other crops better suited for the colony's warm climate, including cotton, indigo, cocoa, and cochineal.

Habersham was tireless in public service. Indeed, his friend George Whitefield feared that he was working too hard on behalf of the colony as well as attending to his own personal and business affairs. In a 1751 letter to a friend, Whitefield expressed his hope that "the Colony affairs may not be too hard upon" Habersham. In effusive praise bordering on the melodramatic, Whitefield predicted that on Habersham's death, he would be regarded a "Martyr for the welfare of Georgia."[16]

The trustees also expressed their approval of Habersham's public service and named his close associates to the Board of Assistants. They applauded his diligence and energy and wanted more people like him on the board. Accordingly, in 1752 his business partner, Francis Harris, became an assistant, as did Pickering Robinson, who, along with Habersham, oversaw the colony's sericulture. Habersham was confident that the two men would bring to the government the same drive and judgment that they had exhibited in their private affairs. Having complained earlier about the assistants' negligence in providing timely reports, Habersham assured the trustees that the new appointees would be more diligent and conscientious. "The Board is now strengthened," Habersham wrote on learning of his friends' appointments, adding, "I am perswaded [they] will exert themselves to serve the Colony, [and] . . . I am assured the Trustees will have their Advices more regular from that Quarter."[17]

After two years on the job, Habersham conceded that his public responsibilities, when added to the demands of his mercantile business, had stretched him to the limit. His duties on the Board of Assistants took an enormous amount of time. He attended lengthy meetings, spent hours recording minutes and drafting reports, and oversaw silk production, making inspection tours of the filature and writing letters to the trustees explaining progress and detailing needs. He did all that while continuing to act as partner in Harris & Habersham, which demanded his close attention to the vast correspondence of the business and required frequent trips to Charlestown. Like his predecessors who had been responsible for sending

reports to the trustees, Habersham began to fall behind in sending minutes of board meetings and accounts of land transactions. When the trustees complained that the board was negligent in their correspondence, Habersham apologized. He acknowledged "not being punctual, is a great Disadvantage to the Colony" and added that his tardiness "has lain on my Spirits with great Weight." He said that he had done "all in my Power" to send reports on a timely basis but admitted that he had failed. Besides, he explained, he got little help. Although Henry Parker and Noble Jones were "both Men of Sense and Probity" and served the public well, according to Habersham, they did not "like Writing." And the Board's clerk, who is "very diligent, loves Writing and will copy almost Day and Night," suffers from being unable to "form a Sentence" and thus required much supervision. It was left then to Habersham to expand and interpret the minutes taken at board meetings and generate reports for the trustees.[18]

Habersham complained that the lack of competent people to assist in transacting public affairs, especially in report writing and record keeping, placed a burden on him that he could not continue to sustain. To the trustees he wrote, "I can truly affirm, that I think no Pains too great to serve the Colony, wherein I may be thought capable, but my private Business, as well as my Duty of Secretary will not allow me to bear so unequal a Weight as that of the Board." He added that he was "so wearied out, that I have frequently thought of desiring the Trustees to excuse my Attendance there, at least my being obliged to do it constantly." In other words, he considered resigning as assistant to concentrate on his duties as secretary. The problem was, he acknowledged, that he could not "execute my Business as Secretary in any tolerable Manner, without knowing what passes there." He repeated his concern about the effect of his public service on his private affairs: "It is almost impossible to say, how much it has occasioned my private Business to suffer, which I have so little Time to attend, that I am almost a Stranger to it." Having vented his frustration, Habersham could offer no practical solution. He concluded, "I know not what remedy to propose, as we have so few People capable to transacting publick Affairs, and indeed of giving up their Time for the small Salarys the Trustees do, or I fear, can, allow."[19]

Although Habersham found that officeholding had costs attached to it, he also discovered its rewards. The first and most tangible perquisite that he gleaned from public service was land. As a merchant, his only real estate was a town lot in Savannah. Now as an assistant, he began to accumulate acreage, which became very valuable when the trustees approved the intro-

duction of slavery in 1749. He applied for his first grant on April 4, 1750, pointing out though he had been an Inhabitant of the colony for many years, hitherto he had received no grant of lands. His application was approved, and Habersham, now age thirty-five, received a five-hundred-acre plot on the Little Ogeechee.[20] Two years later, he petitioned for an additional five hundred acres, this time in the name of his son James Jr. The prevailing trustee land policy restricted to five hundred acres the amount of land that could be granted to an individual, so Habersham circumvented that constraint by securing the grant for his oldest son, though he was a minor. Habersham also made sure that the land he received was good arable acreage. He requested two noncontiguous plots adjoining his original five hundred acres, noting that if granted as one continuous allotment, "one half [would be] unfit for any Manner of Culture."[21] Thus, by virtue of his being on the board, Habersham was able to receive the maximum amount of land, and then some, and to ensure that his land was the best. Over the next dozen years he would steadily add to his holdings, amassing a total of about ten thousand acres.

A second way that Habersham profited from public office was through government contracts. Harris & Habersham benefited from being the colony's principal mercantile house, and Habersham did not hesitate after becoming an assistant to expand the company's business with the magistrates. The firm had supplied James Oglethorpe's regiment at Frederica with provisions until it was disbanded in 1749. Habersham fought to continue that provisioning trade when the Privy Council directed some of the regiment's veterans to join the South Carolina Independent Companies. When he threatened to stop work on the company's wharf and thereby delay direct overseas trade between Savannah and London, the trustees quickly authorized Harris & Habersham "to supply the said Detachments with Provisions." The immediate payoff was an order to the firm for goods valued at more than three hundred pounds sterling.[22] Having saved the provisions trade with Frederica, Habersham sought to expand the company's volume of public business. The most lucrative contracts were those supplying the Indians, and again Habersham used his position and influence, albeit with limited success, to expand Harris & Habersham's share of the Indian trade. By the end of the trustees' governance of Georgia, more than half of all public expenditures went to Habersham and his associates.[23]

When the trustees surrendered their charter in June 1752, the lords commissioners instructed Habersham and the other assistants to continue at

their posts until the king appointed a new government. In March 1754, the Board of Trade named a governor and a council of twelve persons, including Habersham, to govern Georgia with powers similar to those granted other colonies, subject, of course, to the Crown's direction.[24] It would be another six months, however, before the governor would arrive in Savannah.

By the time John Reynolds was inaugurated governor in late 1754, Habersham had been an assistant or councilor for more than five years. Moreover, he had enjoyed immense support from the trustees, who had praised him profusely before the lords commissioners, citing him as the outstanding example of what vision and enterprise could produce in Georgia. Now with the appointment of a royal governor, Habersham looked forward to an even brighter future.

Opponent of Arbitrary Government

In 1753, John Reynolds found himself without a job. As an officer in His Majesty's Navy he had since 1746 commanded HMS *Ambuscade* with its forty guns and 250 men.[25] Assisted by his patron, Lord Philip Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke and the Lord Chancellor, Reynolds had secured his naval appointment from the Lords of the Admiralty. But seven years later he had no command, informing Hardwicke that "all the Ships are given away." Again he looked to Hardwicke for assistance in landing a job. This time Hardwicke contacted Lord Halifax, who was president of the Board of Trade and who recommended Reynolds for the government of Georgia. In June 1752, the trustees for the newest American colony had surrendered their charter, and Georgia had become a royal colony. It was up to the Board of Trade to appoint a governor, subject, of course, to the king's approval.

Reynolds's appointment must be understood first within the context of English politics and the place of patronage in cementing political ties. In the web of influence that determined who got what position, sometimes what mattered most was whom the candidate knew, not how well qualified the person was for the position under consideration. Such seemed to be the case in naming Georgia's first governor. Reynolds's correspondence with Hardwicke reveals that he was far more concerned about landing a job than about guiding the new colony. He urged Hardwicke to press Halifax on his appointment because "if I should fail here it will be long before I can expect to be Employ'd" in the navy. Absent is any comment about Georgia's needs and Reynolds's qualifications to meet those needs. Rather, Reynolds

understood that the appointment turned primarily on personal ties. When Halifax replied to Reynolds's letter, he expressed his "Great Regard for Your Lordship's [Hardwicke's] Recommendation" but was silent on Reynolds's fitness for the post.[26]

After much delay and repeated importunate letters urging Hardwicke to intervene on his behalf, Reynolds received the appointment. However, on arriving at Savannah on October 29, 1754, he questioned his new assignment, wondering if it would bring him the emoluments that he expected and that he believed were due him. In his first letter to Hardwicke, Reynolds reported that, as the inhabitants "are all very poor, I cannot expect the least addition to my Sallery from them."[27] A year after his arrival, the governor complained to the Lords of Trade that "the Charge and Expence of Living in this Country [was] much greater than . . . imagined." Because labor costs were exorbitant, he explained, he "could not subsist the meanest of his Servants here, with Lodging and Board only, 'till he could have a House to live in, under Two Shillings Sterling a Day each." He concluded that his "Sallery being no more than Six hundred pounds a year," he could not expect "to live as a private Gentleman, without any Regard to the Dignity of his Office." He repeated his complaint to Hardwicke that "the Perquisites" of his office in the poor colony were "extreamly Low." Having made his case, Reynolds asked the lords commissioners for a salary increase, reminding them that his "Half Pay in the Navy is saved to the Government at home."[28]

Reynolds's first task was to institute a proper government in Georgia. Once fully developed under his administration, Georgia's government followed the form of other royal colonies. Appointed by the Crown, the governor served at the monarch's pleasure. The councilors were also royal officials who depended on the King "as to . . . term or exercise of the office." According to Benjamin Franklin, those selected for the Council were "chosen from the most considerable residents of the colony." Royal appointees also filled the colony's most important fiscal, legal, and military posts. For their services, councilors received a salary established by law and were entitled to "certain perquisites and incidental fees" for discharging their responsibilities.[29]

Georgia operated within the framework of the British constitution, which defined government powers and guaranteed citizen rights. Largely unwritten, the constitution rested on tradition that set limits to the monarch's authority and established procedures for legislation and taxation. A

few historic documents, emerging from key struggles between Parliament and the Crown, set forth certain personal liberties and property rights, including the proviso that no taxes could be levied without consent of Parliament. The Magna Carta (1215), the Petition of Rights (1628), and the Bill of Rights (1689) all restricted the royal prerogative by safeguarding such fundamental rights as habeas corpus and trial by jury. For Georgians, the constitution and the rights it guaranteed found written expression in two forms. First, the colony's charter extended to Georgians "all liberties, franchises and immunities of free denizens and natural born subjects, within any of our dominions, to all intents and purposes, as if abiding and born within this our kingdom of Great Britain."[30] Second, the royal governor's instructions defined the limits of his authority, and "by his instructions, the governor could take few actions without the advice and consent of his Council."[31]

In terms of fiscal structure, Georgia was unique among the thirteen colonies in British North America. While the others sustained themselves through locally imposed taxes, Georgia, like Nova Scotia, depended on Parliament for a major part of funds necessary to run the government. It was for that reason that Benjamin Franklin in 1766 referred to Georgia and Nova Scotia as "Parliamentary" colonies.[32]

The Council in Georgia bore a resemblance to the House of Lords in England, but there were also some significant differences. By function, it was "to serve as the Upper House of the legislature, to temper the actions of the Lower House and to act as a court of appeals." Although the Council was not a hereditary body, it enjoyed some independence because members were appointed, not elected. Yet "it was not necessarily out of sympathy with the populace as a consequence, for its members were colonials and were directly affected by the measure of the provincial government."[33] As a legislative branch, the Council met without the governor, and along with the House of Assembly, it initiated and considered legislation that was subject to the veto of first the governor and second the Crown. As a judicial body, the Council, along with the governor, acted as the colony's highest court of appeals. Their jurisdiction extended to "cases on appeal involving more than £300 or criminal cases carrying fines of £200 or more."[34] Cases exceeding those limits were appealed to the Privy Council in England. As an executive committee, the Council served as an informal cabinet, advising the governor on a wide range of issues including matters of war and peace, especially affairs with Native American nations.

John Reynolds was not the ideal candidate for governor. In fact, Lord Halifax, president of the Board of Trade, was reluctant to appoint Reynolds. In his reply to Reynolds's petition, Halifax informed the applicant that "there were Five or Six [others that] had Applied for it, and that his Majesty's Service must be regarded in Appointing such who should appear to be best qualified, all Circumstances being considered."[35] His response reflected Halifax's intentions to elevate colonial appointments beyond the needs of domestic politics. But after deferring the decision for a year, he succumbed to Hardwicke's importuning and appointed Reynolds as Georgia's first governor in late 1754.

Habersham, on the other hand, was an obvious choice for a seat on the Council. In summer of 1752 when the trustees prepared to turn the colony over to the Board of Trade, Habersham was the colonist the trustees most often cited as a capable, productive Georgian who gave great promise to the province. Secretary of the Trustees Benjamin Martyn placed Habersham's reports before the lords commissioners in order to acquaint them with the new colony they were about to control. At a meeting of the Board of Trade on June 27, 1751, about a year before the trustees surrendered the charter, the trustees met with the lords commissioners to discuss the conditions in Georgia. Those present included the Earl of Halifax, William Pitt, George Grenville, and Charles Townshend. In making their case that the trade of Georgia was "in an increasing and flourishing way," the trustees laid before them export statistics showing that five ships had been loaded with Georgia commodities for export in 1750. To show what an individual could do by way of trade, they cited the case of "Mr. Habersham, an eminent Merchant in the Colony," who in that year shipped goods on his own account amounting to almost two thousand pounds sterling.[36] Habersham's was the only name included in the report. A year later as the deadline for the transfer of governance neared, Habersham continued to have a prominent place in discussions about Georgia. On June 19, 1752, Martyn informed the Board of Trade of conditions in Georgia "by a Journal, now in your Lordships' office, which was kept by Mr. Habersham, the Trustees Correspondent in Georgia, a Merchant of good Substance, and a Person of great Credibility."[37] As an expression of their desire for continuity and their confidence in Martyn and Habersham, the lords commissioners kept both men in their posts after taking over the colony.

On October 31, 1754, John Reynolds took the oath of office as governor, and James Habersham took the oath as "Secretary, Registrar of Records,

and Clerk of the Council." Those offices made Habersham the second most powerful official in Georgia because they gave him direct contact with royal officials; it would be his reports that the Lords of Trade would rely on for establishing policy in Georgia.[38] The trustees had assured the Lords of Trade that Habersham was a gentleman of high accomplishment and sound judgment and that his accounts of affairs in the colony could be counted on as accurate. Indeed, one could argue that Habersham enjoyed an edge at Whitehall over Governor Reynolds, whose appointment was made with great reluctance.

Soon Reynolds was at odds with Habersham and the Council. Part of the problem was a result of Reynolds's inheriting a council not of his choosing. Another factor was Reynolds's imperious manner. A ship's captain, he was accustomed to giving orders and having them executed without question. He discovered, instead, that Habersham and the other councilmen were subordinates who insisted that the governor scrupulously follow the constitution. One of Reynolds's early meetings with the Council foreshadowed his tumultuous relationship with that body. While he was "sitting in Council," the house suddenly collapsed on the assembly, which "Providentially escaped being buried in the Ruins." The governor saw the incident as symptomatic of the colony's decay and poverty, hardly what he had bargained for.[39]

Despite the incident, the Council's account of Reynolds's arrival was upbeat. Habersham recorded in the minutes for October 30, 1754, the news that royal rule had officially begun in Georgia when "yesterday in the Afternoon, John Reynolds Esq. who came over in His Majesty's Ship the *Port Mahon,* landed at this Town." Having struggled for years with weak leadership, the councilors welcomed the Crown's appointee. Patrick Graham, board president, and Habersham, secretary, included in the minutes the board's sentiments on welcoming the new governor: "The Board, on this Occasion cannot omit acknowledging with the Greatest Gratitude His Majesty's Paternal Care in appointing and sending over a Governor, and setting the Government of this province, which was so much wanted."[40] Far from desiring *less* government, Habersham and other enterprising Georgians had long desired *more* government that would provide protection from enemies, infrastructure for commerce, and administration of justice.

Initially, the governor and Council worked together to solve common problems. One of the first matters they jointly addressed was the need for

new chambers. Habersham noted that at the November 4, 1754, meeting the Council took into consideration "to provide a proper Place for Theirs and the Assembly's meeting," deciding that a vacant building, originally constructed for "lodging and sorting Cocoons," could be "fitted up for public Offices." Toward that end, Reynolds appointed Habersham, Jonathan Bryan, and Noble Jones to examine what was necessary to convert the filature into a Council House.[41] While the collapsing building disrupted Council proceedings, it did not create ill will between the governor and the Council. Indeed, it illustrates the opposite: a cooperative relationship. And it shows that Habersham enjoyed respect from the governor, who appointed him to head the first committee he named.

Signs of amicable relations between Reynolds and the Council soon faded, however, when the governor lectured the councilors on his royal powers as contained in His Majesty's instructions. Every royal governor operated through a set of instructions drafted for the Crown's imprimatur by the Board of Trade. Reynolds, therefore, arrived with a series of instructions aimed at guiding him in such matters as enforcing trade laws, administering justice, granting land, and collecting quit rents and taxes. However, rather than being forthcoming and placing his instructions before the Council in order for them to understand the guidelines under which he and they would operate, Reynolds decided to make the Council aware of the instructions in a piecemeal fashion. Reynolds's approach was that of a ship's captain who possessed unchallenged authority over his officers at sea and expected unquestioning loyalty. The councilors, on the other hand, wanted a leader who regarded them as trusted colleagues and who led through persuasive reasoning and personal example. To remind them of his authority and keep the councilors off balance, the governor selected individual clauses for lecturing the Council on constitutional issues. At the November 4 meeting, for instance, after dispensing with the business of the day, Reynolds selected the eleventh article of the king's instructions to read to his councilors. It stated that if a councilor were absent for more than a year without leave, then his place on the Council would be declared void. The directive also informed Habersham and his colleagues that if they were absent when duly summoned, then the governor could suspend them.[42] Although the minutes of the Council meeting contain no indication of the councilors' reaction to Reynolds's outlining their responsibilities while remaining mute about his own, subsequent actions indicate that the rift between governor and Council dates from this occasion.

Next, Reynolds informed the Council of his instructions governing the election of the Assembly, which would act as the colony's lower legislative house. The guidelines were consistent with those that prevailed in other colonies: a representative could not be a "Popish Recusant," could not be under twenty-one years of age, and had to possess at least five hundred acres of land. Voters for representatives had to meet the first two restrictions, but just fifty acres would satisfy the property requirement.[43] As with his instructing the councilors about their attendance obligations, Reynolds's lecture on the Assembly did not sit well with the Council—again, not so much because of the substance of the instructions but because of his imperious manner in presenting them.

Reynolds also challenged one of the Council's most visible powers: the allocation of land to private citizens. Over the preceding two years, after the trustees surrendered their charter and before Reynolds arrived, the councilors had exercised sole right to dispense land. Persons wishing a grant would petition the board for a specified number of acres in a particular region. The councilors would then consider the request on the basis of the petitioner's ability to improve the land, that is, the number of servants or slaves he had available for clearing and cultivating. If they found the applicant eligible, the councilors would order a survey to establish the boundaries and then make the grant, subject to final approval by the Board of Trade. This land-granting power meant that Georgians of property and influence looked to the Council for the most valuable resource that underlay their quest for wealth. It also meant that the councilors grew wealthier by making liberal grants to themselves. Reynolds proclaimed that all land grants made by the Council in the interregnum must be reviewed, and if approved by the governor, new grants would be issued, thus diminishing the Council's power, or at least the perception of power. While recognizing the governor's authority, the councilors insisted on their prerogative of advice and consent.

Over the next several months, councilors continued to observe gubernatorial actions that disturbed them deeply, suggesting to them that Reynolds was more concerned about personal aggrandizement than Georgia's prosperity. They watched as he refused to solicit their advice and consent on such important matters as treating with the Indians. Worse, they watched the governor bypass them in running public affairs by relying more on his personal staff than on the Council. Reynolds had brought with him to Georgia one William Little, a longtime aide in the navy. Within a few

weeks, Reynolds had named Little his private secretary, then clerk of the Assembly, clerk of the Crown and peace, clerk of the general court, justice of the peace, secretary and commissary for Indian affairs, and aide-de-camp to the governor. The councilors disapproved of both his multiple offices and his performance in them. In a memorial and remonstrance that the councilors drew up and presented to the governor on September 12, 1755, they charged that "Little improperly interferes in the Departments of the Kings Officers, striving all he can to make Business uneasy to them, & censuring their Abilitys, or Depreciating their Offices in Order to render the Officers contemptible." Specifically, Reynolds had pushed aside Patrick Graham, who was in charge of dispensing presents to the Indians and had placed Little in charge of negotiations with the Creeks. Moreover, the councilors accused Little of slandering and threatening "the whole Council in a public Street: notwithstanding he himself has manifested as little Industry or Capacity in the Places he enjoys as any Person in Office in the Colony."[44] While the remonstrance aimed at Little's misconduct, its real target was Governor Reynolds, whose contempt for his councilors had alienated the men who should have been his strongest supporters.

The Council members had two overriding grievances. First, they accused the governor of putting private interests ahead of the public good. No doubt drafted by Secretary Habersham, the remonstrance said that William Little "frequently misrepresents your Excellency, as having your Promotion in the Navy more at Heart than the Prosperity of the Colony." The governor made no secret that he wanted out of Georgia as soon as a better position opened in the patronage lists. Second, the councilors charged the governor with violating their fundamental liberties. They accused Little of placing "narrow Literal Interpretations" on the governor's powers, not in a way to "settle the Government here upon the Plan of Clemency and liberty indulged to in the neighbouring Colonys," but in a manner that subverted the freedom of Georgians, including the councilors themselves. The councilors accused Little of violating their rights of free debate and petition for redress of grievances by determining to "suspend any Counsellor or Kings Officer who shall transmit to England any Account of public Affairs." The memorialists concluded their remonstrance by asking Reynolds to remove Little from his offices.[45]

Little responded to the charges in a letter to the governor that Reynolds placed in the Council's minutes, an act that infuriated the councilors. Little swore his loyalty to the king and to the governor by reciting his service

record of twenty years. Like Reynolds, Little was on half pay in His Majesty's Navy. Having established his loyalty, the secretary denied interfering in any way with "the Departments of the King's Officers," except perhaps in one way. He said that during legislative sessions, "Mr. Habersham used frequently to come to me for Advice and Assistance in forming the Minutes of the Council." That statement in particular must have rankled Habersham, who had had the responsibility during the three previous years of preparing minutes for the president and assistants as well as drafting all official reports to London. Moreover, as a merchant engaged in overseas trade he had voluminous correspondence with London merchants: orders, bills of lading, invoices, bills of exchange as well as careful instructions regarding items ordered and commodities to be sold. Little added that one of the councilors had told him that Habersham was "absolutely insufficient for his Employments, adding with an arch look, that there was one Qualification He thought requisite in a Secretary or Clerk that Habersham wanted and that is, knowing how to spell." With a parting shot, Little finished his attack on Habersham. "I have labour'd to make no Man contemptible," he wrote, "alas the Deportment of Some People makes that Work altogether unnecessary."[46] Whether or not Little's accusations were accurate, it is clear that the governor and his secretary viewed Habersham with suspicion. Indeed, Reynolds regarded Habersham as the head of a bloc within the Council determined to challenge the governor's power.

The councilors countered with a second petition to the governor, expressing "Surprise and Concern" that Reynolds had given official status to Little's response by insisting it be placed in the Council's minutes. In other words, how dare the governor equate an official act of the Council and a usurper's scurrilous attack. Further, they contrasted their plea with Little's. They characterized their memorial as being "replete with nothing but the Facts complained of, which they are ready to prove in the most Formal Manner." On the contrary, they viewed Little's letter as "a contemptuous Asperity against his Majesty's Council, ill becoming a Private person on whom they lavished favors, . . . made up of Indecent Invectives against Particular Councillors, & notorious Misrepresentations of Men & Things." They expressed their fear that the result of Little's letter was to "Lessen or Invalidate your Excellencys wonted Confidence in your Natural Councillors, who have collectively & Individually given incontestable Proofs of their Loyalty."[47]

The memorialists then shifted their focus from Little to the governor.

They accused Reynolds of denying them their most basic right and responsibility: that of advice and consent. The councilors expressed their regret that "your Excellency is pleased to issue Proclamations without their Advice & Consent, even in affairs in which they are to have the honor of Cooperating with your Excellency." Because the governor ignored the Council's advisory role, the memorialists claimed that they were "precluded from giveing their Opinions as it is their Duty to do." Moreover, they added, if the governor consulted them after issuing a proclamation or taking action, "it can only be on Points apparently Predetermined." The remonstrance concluded by again calling for Little's removal from all his public jobs.[48]

An irate Reynolds dismissed the councilors' charges by lecturing the Council on his rights and privileges. First, he asserted that Little's letter to him was a "proper Answer," and he set a hearing for "Proving the Facts alledged against Mr. Little." He claimed that the councilors had agreed to such a hearing "when Mr. Habersham should return from Carolina." The mention of Habersham suggests that both Reynolds and his fellow councilors thought that it was essential for him to be involved in any proceedings, that his concurrence must be obtained before the matter could be resolved. Thus the governor said his preference was to wait until Habersham returned from a business trip before further addressing the issue of Little's status. At the hearing, Reynolds made his gubernatorial authority the central issue, asserting that he had constitutional authority to govern with minimum consultation. He argued, first, that "His Majesty's Commission and Instructions to me [were] . . . the Sole Basis and Constitution of this Government." Furthermore, those instructions, he contended, were "extremely Clear," specifying "those Matters wherein the Advice and Consent of the Council are necessary to be had, and in all others sufficiently Authorise me to Govern this Colony without consulting them." Reynolds assured the councilors that he was determined to act alone "whenever I shall Judge Proper; and I should be unworthy of my Office if ever I were to descend to be a President of the Council."[49] His point was that he was far more than first among equals. He was the sole repository of power in most cases.

The governor defended his performance to date. He stated, "it has been my general practice to Govern my self by Your Advice, which will always have it's due weight with me." Insisting that he had been cooperative, he warned the councilors, "I expect that no Member of this Board will Presume again to tell me in Council, that he thinks I ought to lay all the Pub-

lic Letters I write, before the Council, for their Approbation, before I send them to England; or that I ought to give a Copy of all my Instructions to the Council; or that the word You, so often repeated in my Instructions, means the Council; or that I have ever connived at Prosecutions intended against any Member of the Council."[50] His message was clear: he alone had access to all elements of what he considered to be Georgia's constitution and that he only would interpret its meaning.

Reynolds then lectured the Council on its proper role and deference toward him. He cautioned them against doubting his "Authority to suspend any of the Members of the Council." And he warned them not to violate "that subordination so absolutely necessary in Government, and so wisely established here by the best of Kings." The governor then summed up what he expected of the councilors: "You will Defeat the Schemes of Wicked and Designing Men, by uniting in the support of that Authority His Majesty has been pleased to invest me with, and assisting me with your best Advice, in all such Matters as I shall think proper to recommend to your consideration, for promoting the true Interest and Welfare of this Colony, which I have very much at Heart."[51] The tone of his message was that his understanding of the councilors' role was definitive and that they should hew to the line he set forth.

On Friday, October 10, a group of councilors led by Habersham escalated the conflict with a memorial summarizing their charges against the governor and sending it to the Board of Trade. Referring to themselves simply as "the Majority of His Majesty's Council," they began by expressing their "Surprise & Concern" at Reynolds's intemperate defense of Little and attack on the Council. They characterized Little as a "Designing, Evil-minded Man, [who] has been long attempting to destroy the Harmony which used to subsist between Your Excellency & the Council." The councilors assured the governor that they were "laboring to Defeat" Little's "Schemes" in order to "promote the true Interest, and Prosperity of the Colony."[52] Having dispensed with their intentions toward Little, the memorialists turned their attention to the governor and his conduct in office. They charged him with abusing his power by exceeding his instructions and ignoring the Council. Specifically, they told the governor, "of the Eight Proclamations You have been pleasd to issue, Four appear to have issued without the Advice & Consent of your Council." They then singled out proclamations related to land grants and tenure, issues at the center of

the councilors' official powers and personal interests.[53] In other words, they should have been issued only after the Council had given its advice and consent.

Hence, with less than one year's experience of working with a royal governor, the Council, like legislative assemblies throughout the colonies, had challenged gubernatorial power and authority. Having established their position that the governor must rule with their concurrence, the memorialists claimed that it followed that "they have just Pretensions to a decent Freedom of Speech & Debate in delivering That Advice." They reasoned, "if their Consent is Requisite, they have then an Implyd Right of Dissenting from any Propositions they shall Judge to Clash with the Trust reposed in them as his Majestys Council for this Province."[54] With that statement of independence, the councilors ended their memorial. They had argued for an independent voice in the colony's government: the right to advise and consent on all matters, the right to dissent from gubernatorial interpretation, and the right to free speech and debate in their deliberations.

A slim majority signed the memorial. Habersham headed the list of five signatories to the document, and all but Alexander Kellet, a recent immigrant, had longstanding ties to the secretary. Also affixing their signatures were Francis Harris, Habersham's business partner; Jonathan Bryan, Habersham's friend from his days as superintendent at Bethesda; and Noble Jones, Habersham's neighbor and fellow assistant under the trustees. The protestors sent their petition to the Board of Trade, asking that body to address Reynolds's abuse of power.

On receiving the councilors' petition, the Board of Trade acted with uncharacteristic speed. They appointed Henry Ellis lieutenant governor with instructions for him to assume executive leadership immediately. At the same time, they ordered Reynolds to return to England and "give an Account of the present situation and Circumstances of [Georgia] and of [his] Conduct in the Administration of Government there."[55] Although the lords commissioners offered no explicit statement why they gave validity to the councilors' charges, no doubt they weighed the reputations of the accusers and the accused. They had grown to depend on Habersham as a forthright secretary whose reports were candid and accurate. On the other hand, they knew that Lord Halifax had great reluctance in appointing Reynolds as governor.

Reynolds blamed the Georgia Council for his demise. First, he criticized

the structure. He noted that rather than his being able to name his own advisers, "all of the Members of the Council were nominated in my Instructions." He claimed that because of prior appointments, "no Place of any Profit was left at my disposal, except the Clerkship of the Assembly, which was not worth Fifty pounds a year." In other words, he arrived in Georgia with little patronage to secure a loyal staff. Second, Reynolds blamed the men on the Council for his troubles. He noted that five of the original ten named, including James Habersham, "were the President and Assistants, who governed the colony when it was in the Trustees' hands." The implication was that those holdovers were predisposed to undermine royal rule. He singled out Alexander Kellet and Habersham for his most vituperative remarks. Recommended by Halifax, Kellet was a councilor and provost marshal. In Reynolds's estimation, he was the "most troublesome" person in the colony, stirring up trouble among the other members of the Council. Reynolds was convinced that Kellet "very probably informed them that complaints against me would be agreable to Lord Halifax." The former governor suggested that Habersham was incompetent but extremely persuasive within the Council. As if he were still defending William Little's multiple offices, Reynolds noted that Habersham was a member of the Council, "Secretary of the Province, Register of the Records, and Clerk of the Council." He claimed that Habersham was a mere "Usher to the School at Whitefield's Orphan House in Georgia, from whence he was taken to be made one of the Board of President and Assistants." Though named secretary to the board, Habersham, according to Reynolds, "wrote a poor Hand, and had a worse Head for a Secretary." He charged him with being "fond of hard words, tho' he did not understand them, and was very awkward in every branch of his business, which caused me much trouble and fatigue." While making Habersham out to be incompetent, Reynolds accorded him great weight and influence among the other councilors. He said that Habersham and his partner Francis Harris were "the most considerable people in the colony, having great influence over most of the Inhabitants, by getting them in Debt for goods." He charged the merchants with "fingering the Publick money remitted by the Trustees during their Trust, and afterwards by the Crown," and thereby, "they got near Two Thousand pounds a piece."[56] Given the former governor's preoccupation with increasing his own income, one wonders if part of Reynolds's venom toward Habersham was not envy.

Reynolds's replacement and Georgia's second royal governor, Henry Ellis, possessed the qualities Habersham valued: he was deliberate, conscientious, and diplomatic. From his arrival at Savannah on February 16, 1757, he began to restore harmony to the political system. After taking the oath of office, he instructed all officials, including Secretary James Habersham, to carry on their duties as usual. Next, he adjourned the legislature and quietly began removing from office those Reynolds appointees who had caused so much discord. Most importantly from Habersham's perspective, Ellis pledged to work closely with the Council, recognizing that it consisted of "the most substantial men in the colony" and "offered a substantial foundation" on which he could build. Thus, unlike Reynolds, who regarded the Council as his enemy, Ellis viewed it as his strongest ally, and with its support, the new governor not only restored calm but accomplished much in his three-year tenure.[57] Habersham, who had been one of the Council's leading critics of Reynolds, became one of Ellis's staunchest supporters.

When Ellis called the old legislature back into session in mid-June, he defeated William Little's designs to control the Assembly, not by moving directly against Reynolds's lieutenant, but by making allies of the legislators. He succeeded because he proposed a legislative initiative that would give Georgians what they had long desired: a stronger defense, a more robust economy, and a growing population. First, he addressed the fear of Indian attack by reassigning men who customarily worked on roads to build a series of fortifications to augment the one fort that already existed at Augusta. Within three months, a wooden palisade surrounded Savannah, and four new forts went up, one to the north of Savannah and three to the south. He augmented the rangers that Reynolds had organized with a militia consisting of able-bodied men, and he succeeded in attracting a small body of royal troops to the Georgia frontier. Though still inadequate, Georgia's much-improved defenses made the colony more attractive to new settlers, and thus Ellis's defense measures paved the way for increased population.[58] Ellis did not rely on military solutions alone. In his most important diplomatic success, he negotiated an alliance with the Creeks, turning a longtime frontier menace into an ally.

Ellis's second legislative initiative was aimed at putting Georgia's public finances on a sound footing, an objective long sought by Habersham. Indeed, when Habersham framed his economic development plan in 1747, he urged the government to adopt policies that would promote trade. With

the approval of the Council, Ellis introduced legislation that reduced the public debt, instituted an annual budget of expenditures, and introduced paper currency. Habersham could have easily written the justification for an infusion of more money into Georgia's economy. Ellis argued that the new currency would help planters become more productive by "investing it in Negroes the labour of whom not only served to improve the lands but added also to the export of the province and thereby diminished the Balance of Trade against it."[59]

The governor's third policy sought to attract new settlers by making good land available to them. First, he voided old grants that had not been developed into productive farms. Second, he insisted on some restriction on the size of individual holdings in order to increase the number of middle-sized farms in the colony. His goal was to make the colony attractive to yeoman farmers and not a colony where a few large planters operated huge plantations with gangs of slaves. He justified his policies on grounds that again were compatible with those Habersham had been advocating for a decade. The object, Ellis declared, "is the increase of produce and extension of Commerce." Years after Ellis left the governor's office in 1760, Habersham wrote him a letter reporting on Georgia's prospering economy, made possible in no small measure by Ellis's policies. Habersham reported that "40 square rigged Vessels" were before Savannah on the river, evidence of a colony "making a rapid progress in her Commerce, Wealth and Population."[60] Ellis's administration had helped stabilize the struggling colony, and Habersham wanted him to know that his efforts had borne fruit.

Though his tenure was brief, Ellis provided just the kind of leadership that Habersham had hoped for when John Reynolds arrived. In large part Ellis succeeded because he won Habersham's support through policies that made sense. But the two men also developed a personal friendship rooted in mutual respect and trust. One bond was their common aversion to Georgia's summer heat. Ellis literally recorded the temperature as he walked the streets of Savannah with a thermometer dangling from the brim of his hat. Their friendship went beyond the weather and extended after Ellis left Georgia in 1760, when his lieutenant governor James Wright succeeded him. In their correspondence, Habersham referred to the ex-governor as "My friend," and Ellis flattered Habersham with effusive praise. On his departure, Ellis asked Habersham to look after his Georgia affairs, knowing that no one else could better oversee his lands and financial interests. For

more than a decade, Habersham acted as the former governor's attorney; in 1771, he sent Ellis the proceeds from the sale of his Georgia lands.[61]

Habersham's opposition to Reynolds and his support of Ellis reveal his core political values. He was unswervingly loyal to the British constitution and adamantly opposed to anyone who violated it, including a royal governor. Moreover, he learned a lesson that he would follow during the years leading to the American Revolution: the constitution works, and legitimate grievances are redressed. Ironically, Habersham's opposition to a royal governor strengthened his loyalty to the Crown.

CHAPTER FIVE

Silk Hope

Planter and Slaveholder

In the early 1750s, James Habersham left Savannah and his mercantile business for Silk Hope, his plantation on the Little Ogeechee, where his success as a planter rested in large part on policies he helped shape as a councilor. As an insider on the land-granting Council, he obtained prime acreage, and as a successful lobbyist for slave labor, he secured an abundance of cheap labor. With considerable irony, Habersham christened his first plantation Silk Hope, conjuring the trustees' original dream of free white hands reeling silk thread from cocoons cultivated on white mulberry trees. The reality was that Silk Hope would produce white gold in the form of rice by exploiting unfree black hands.

Silk Hope and his two other slave-worked rice plantations—Forest Dean and Beverley—produced great wealth for Habersham, elevating him to the top of Georgia society. A decade after clearing ground, he was shipping hundreds of barrels of rice to London annually, netting thousands of pounds sterling from their sale. As a rice planter, he assumed his place among the colony's wealthiest gentlemen with assets and income that in England would have assured his place among the landed gentry. No doubt he was thinking about his English roots when he named one of his plantations Beverley, perhaps reflecting on how far he had come from the tiny half-timbered house in Saturday Market.

Land, Capital, and Slaves

Prospects for a profitable rice plantation began with good land. His Majesty's Surveyor William DeBrahm described the ideal site for productive plantations. He wrote in his report on Georgia that "the best plantations are those which have good soil, especially much rice land, good lumber, tall white oaks and cypresses, and are situated close to the river and not far from

the capital."[1] He could have been describing Habersham's plantations. Located on the Little Ogeechee within ten miles of Savannah, Habersham's plantations fit DeBrahm's description: great expanses of fertile soil, a river whose tidal forces would flood and drain the rice fields, and close proximity to Savannah's wharves, where barrels of rice would be deposited for overseas shipment.

As a member of the Council under royal rule, Habersham added to the 1,000 acres he had acquired during his tenure as an assistant. After securing his existing properties with a royal title, he expanded his holdings with new grants. First, in late 1755 he received a 900-acre parcel on the Little Ogeechee, almost doubling his total. From 1756 through 1762, during the French and Indian War, Habersham received, either in his own name or as partner in the firm Harris & Habersham, an additional 1,070 acres in the district of Ogeechee, in Christ Church Parish, and in the township of Savannah.[2]

After the war, the Treaty of Paris extended Georgia's southern border from the Altamaha River to St. Marys River, and Habersham received grants in the new parish of St. Mary totaling about 3,500 acres.[3] Landholders in colonies to the north suffered a loss of land or at least faced a delay in expanding westward as a result of the Proclamation of 1763, wherein Parliament prohibited settlement west of the Appalachians. But Georgians, especially those close to Governor Wright and his Council, gained access to new lands. Habersham flourished under royal government, becoming the third largest landowner in Georgia, joining Governor Wright and John Graham as the colony's wealthiest planters.

In addition to land grants, Habersham acquired acreage through purchases, primarily from business and personal connections. He bought land from, among others, his longtime friend Jonathan Bryan, the Indian trader Lachlan McGillivray, and his son-in-law and Speaker of the House, Alexander Wylly.[4] What is noteworthy about those transactions is that Habersham had the funds and credit to purchase the plots. In cash-strapped Georgia, few people had the means to buy large amounts of land. Habersham did, and on March 26, 1756, he paid two hundred pounds sterling for Bryan's thousand-acre plantation, Walnut Hill.[5] Further, Habersham did not allow political disputes to interfere with his accumulation of land. Though Wylly opposed him in the constitutional crisis with Britain in the 1760s and 1770s, the two men put aside their differences to close their land deal.

No matter how fertile and well watered, land was of little value without

sufficient low-cost labor to work it. In a policy continued by royal governors, the Georgia trustees had made land grants conditional on the owners' having sufficient labor to work the acreage. By the time Habersham began accumulating land, in practical terms the policy meant that landholding and slaveholding proceeded apace. A person who applied to the Council for a grant had to cite the number of slaves available for cultivating it. Thus, on April 3, 1755, when Habersham asked his fellow councilors for a grant of 900 acres, he maintained that he had 33 slaves, a number capable of working a "larger Tract" than the 1,000 acres he already owned. A year later, he sought 300 more acres, noting that he had acquired 8 more slaves. Throughout the 1760s, Habersham added to his acreage, always justifying new plots by citing his growing "family" of slaves. The Council minutes for March 7, 1765, indicate that Habersham "had yet seventy Persons in family for whom he had obtained no Land Therefore [he was] praying for Fifteen hundred Acres" on the Satilla River. The next year he received another 5,000 acres, citing a labor force of 134 as justification. And the following year, he petitioned for 2,000 more acres, stating that he had "more than forty Negroes for whom he had Obtained no Land."[6] Habersham continued acquiring land and slaves until he could boast of "near two hundred Souls" working his more than 10,000 acres.[7]

Rice cultivation required backbreaking labor.[8] Before any planting could be attempted, the wet coastal grasslands that covered much of the lowlands along the Savannah, Ogeechee, and Altamaha rivers had to be cleared and drained. Even John Bolzius, the most reluctant endorser of slavery in Georgia, agreed with Habersham that Europeans and their white servants were ill suited for such work and had made little headway in establishing a rice plantation in the Georgia wilderness. He described Georgia at the end of the trustee period before the establishment of the great rice plantations such as Habersham's Silk Hope. In response to the question "Whether the land is well settled yet, and cleared of superfluous trees and bushes," he replied: "in our Georgia everything is still forest, and small plantations have been established only here and there."[9] Cultivation was possible only after the land was cleared of the thick tangle of natural vegetation that grew out of the rich soil and the stubborn roots that held it in place. Trees had to be felled, stripped of branches, piled in heaps, and burned. Then the roots had to be extracted and burned. Once that process was completed, much remained to be done before rice could be planted. Because of the necessity of periodic flooding to nourish the plants and kill weeds, the cleared land had

to be protected by dams that kept unwanted water out of the fields. Then a series of ditches had to be dug in order to bring the desired amount of water to each row and drain it away as needed. If the land lay near a river, a series of floodgates had to be built to introduce freshwater at high tide and keep out brackish water at low tide.[10]

Georgians had attempted to cultivate rice before the trustees allowed slavery but soon concluded that clearing land exceeded the capacity or will of white Europeans. Anglican priest Bartholomew Zouberbuhler expressed his frustration in clearing land without slave labor. He described his land as "over run with Weeds, Bryars, and thick under brush," which his two indentured servants found "difficult to clear." He added that as the land was "low and Wett, I ditch'd about five Acres all round, and run several Ditches a Cross, which was heavy work and took up a great deal of Time, especially as the ground was very rooty, and several large Trees laying in the Way to be cut, removed and burnt." After all that work, the results were disappointing. In the first year that he planted rice, he "did not have a grain" because the land was still "too rooty."[11]

Though a costly investment, slave labor paid off for planters, such as Habersham, who could afford it. William DeBrahm pointed to the rapid growth in the slave population as evidence that slavery made economic sense. He said that when he first arrived in Georgia in 1751, "he scarce met three dozen of African Servants, and they had not been above ten Month's introduced in the Province. Their Sum is since increased to 13000. Of whom are at least 12000 employed in the Plantations." Written in 1764, DeBrahm's estimates indicate an annual growth rate of about a thousand slaves per year. Although the initial cost of a slave was high relative to that of an indentured servant, the annual expense for maintaining the slave was low. DeBrahm reckoned that a "good Negro man costs between £30 and £40, a price for which newly arrived Negroes also have recently been sold. A good Negro woman is not bought under £30." But, he added, upkeep cost little, with annual clothing "for each Negro com[ing] to about 10s. . . . (except for the carpets or woolen blankets)," and annual food allotments per slave amounting to not "much over 8d. . . . a week," or less than 2 pounds per year. By comparison, indentured servants cost 5 or 6 pounds sterling to acquire, about 15 percent of the cost of slaves, but white servants cost "at least £8 per year for food and clothing," almost three times the cost of a slave.[12] With those comparative costs, a planter could see that after about six years, a servant's total cost equaled or exceeded that of a slave. Moreover,

the planter could extract labor from a slave for the slave's natural life as opposed to a fixed term of years from the servant, usually no more than seven. And as human assets, slaves reproduced value through offspring.

Habersham showed no evidence of wrestling with either the moral question of slavery in general or his ownership of slaves in particular. He rationalized that he had not enslaved anyone, that he had merely purchased men and women already in bondage. He ignored arguments posited by his friend John Bolzius, who pointed out that by creating a market for human beings, slaveholders were complicit in the ongoing enslavement of Africans to satisfy demand in the evil commerce. Moreover, Habersham quickly concluded that slavery was a positive good and not a necessary evil because it introduced benighted pagans to the glories of the Christian faith. Despite the strenuous objections of his fellow slaveholders, he employed a young minister, Cornelius Winter, to conduct regular services for his slaves. Winter noted that many of the slaves were indifferent to religious instruction, perhaps resenting yet another encroachment on their free time. Although all indications suggest that Habersham was sincere in his interest in his slaves' spiritual well-being, one can only wonder if his efforts were as much for his needs as those of his slaves.

Habersham had an advantage over other planters in purchasing slaves because, as a merchant, he imported them, and even after Harris & Habersham ceased its overseas operations, he continued to have a financial interest in mercantile houses that dealt in slaves. Thus, he knew how the trade worked, how merchants bought and sold slaves, and how they prepared them for market. John Bolzius gives us an eyewitness account of one of Habersham's slave auctions where, in the spring of 1753, he purchased five slaves. Habersham had brought a shipload of slaves to Savannah from St. Kitts and St. Christopher and auctioned them in April after having washed and dressed them for sale. Habersham's human "merchandise" impressed Bolzius, especially their "good appearance." Nonetheless, he was disturbed at the heartless nature of the slave trade, finding it particularly repugnant that children were torn from their mothers and sold separately at the auction.[13]

To Habersham, slaves were valuable assets that appreciated over time. His net worth grew with the rising market value of slaves and through the natural increase in his slave population. Indeed, he was most aware of his slaves' value when he faced losses through death. In spring of 1764, smallpox swept through Silk Hope, killing seven of Habersham's slaves. His re-

action to the tragedy reveals that he regarded slaves primarily in economic terms. He reported in a letter to a New York friend whom he had just visited that "since I arrived here, I have lost by Death 6 fine able Negroes besides a lusty girl and also a man just before I embarked." He estimated that he could not "replace them for Four Hundred Pounds Sterling." Habersham did not, however, ignore the human dimension of the tragedy, expressing compassion for grieving slaves who lost companions and spouses. Of one man whose wife succumbed to the disease, Habersham wrote, "the poor fellow is inconsolable."[14]

Plantation Management

Habersham tackled plantation operations the same way he approached his mercantile business. Indeed, he regarded his plantations as "factories in the fields."[15] When he made the transition from merchant to planter in the mid-1750s, he regarded the move more as a shift in investment than a radical change in profession. "After I determined to wind up my Concerns in Trade," he wrote, "I put my Interest in the planting Way, and retired with my family to one of my settlements to the Country about 8 or 9 miles from this Town." He quickly determined that to be a profitable rice planter, he must produce large quantities of low-cost, high-quality grain and ship his crops at advantageous times to take advantage of the best markets. Not content with being a passive investor who left operations to an overseer, Habersham involved himself in every aspect of rice cultivation, from clearing the land to marketing the milled grain. By the mid-1760s he had earned such a solid reputation as a profitable planter that many prominent Georgians sought his advice in running their plantations while absent from the colony. By then, he could reflect on Silk Hope and his other properties with considerable satisfaction for the way they ran. "I suppose my Business is as well executed," he wrote in 1765, "as any Planters in the Province." He added, "everything with me in the planting Way is reduced into a kind of regular System."[16] He understood that profits, whether from a mercantile house or a rice plantation, resulted from sound management, and when he moved to Silk Hope he put that understanding into practice.

Although most large rice planters followed similar procedures for clearing, ditching, planting, cultivating, harvesting, and processing rice, the results of their efforts depended greatly on individual judgment and supervision. Planters were judged by two yardsticks: yield per acre and quality of

grain produced, and both the amount of rice produced and its grade determined how well the planter would do at market. Mistakes at any step along the way could be costly when selling the crop. For example, inadequate clearing could leave a tangled web of dense roots from the junglelike vegetation that covered much of Georgia's low country. Or if dams were poorly constructed, heavy rains or storms could breach the levee and possibly introduce saltwater, which could sour a field for years. Or if during cultivation volunteer rice stalks were not removed, then the quality of the crop could be compromised. Volunteers were plants that sprang up from seed that had fallen during harvesting the previous year's crop, and they produced a red grain that tainted the new rice. Or, if wet sheaves intermingled with dry ones in the harvest, a sizable portion of the grain could be lost during processing. Much depended on the expertise and vigilance of the owner and the knowledge and diligence of the overseer.

A good, reliable overseer was key to the success of a rice plantation. Habersham understood the value of someone who could direct daily activities, extracting the maximum work from the slaves while at the same time treating them as humans and Christians. By the late 1760s, he knew exactly what he wanted and was unwilling to settle for less. In a newspaper advertisement, Habersham sought an experienced "overseer who understands managing a Rice Plantation." He also insisted on one who "can be properly recommended," insisting "none other need apply."[17] In other words, the position was far too important to fill based solely on the applicant's word. Habersham wished to interrogate previous planters on the candidate's abilities and effectiveness.

Habersham preferred to regard overseers as employees and compensated them with a salary. Further, he thought that they should act under the strict instructions of the planters who hired them. In a letter to Henry Laurens, Habersham expressed his opinion that "no Overseer or Manager ought to have any right to dispose of Property." He added that he did not like "Shares," meaning a sharecropping arrangement in which the overseers had broad authority to raise a crop for a percentage of the revenue it yielded. Habersham conceded that sharecropping could be viewed as a type of partnership, a reward for exceptional overseers. He said that Governor Wright "has got a man, he cannot well refuse and I have another growing fast in this way in my hands." He explained that offering shares comes from good intentions but often results in bad consequences. "Our gratitude leads us into Difficulties," he wrote, "and we meet with so few subjects to exercise it

upon that when we think we do, we too often are deceived."[18] In other words, Habersham was much more comfortable with an overseer as a dependent strictly accountable to him for executing his instructions than with an independent subcontractor whose self-interest might run counter to the planter's' wishes or best interest.

Habersham knew from firsthand experience the problems created by a lazy, incompetent, or dishonest overseer. As William Knox's attorney-in-fact, he paid close attention to operations at Knox's plantations and had opportunity to observe the overseer's performance. In a letter of January 15, 1772, Habersham recommended replacing the supervisor. As justification for such serious action, he provided the following account of a recent incident:

> He is very plausible and talkative, keeps a Journal of every days work, as he says, and from it, he gave me an account of 60 or 70,000 shingles more, than he had to deliver, which made me look very foolish, after having engaged them. The fact was, he had taken the Negroes Account of their daily work without further examination, which he owned, after he found me determined to resent his imposing a Falsity upon me.[19]

Habersham complained about the overseer's competency and character. He had no use for the supervisor's lack of diligence in verifying the slaves' figures and his dishonesty in standing by those numbers as being accurate.

As important as overseers were, Habersham knew that slaves made his plantations profitable. Though he held them as dependents, Habersham was dependent on his slaves, not only for their physical labor but for their knowledge of rice cultivation. Nonetheless, as a slaveholder, Habersham exercised absolute power over his slaves, whom he considered as assets, productive chattel that he bought, sold, and bequeathed at will. Like many other slave owners, Habersham took a paternalistic attitude toward his bondsmen, often referring to slaves as part of his "family."

While the fact of slavery as an absolute and permanent condition was as oppressive under Habersham as it was under any other slaveholder, his treatment of slaves reflected a more humane character. He concerned himself with their physical well-being, a point reflected in an order for slave clothing he placed with his agent in London: "you must understand that the Governor, Mr. Harris, and myself are desirous if it can conveniently be done, to cloth our Negroes a little better than common, and we suppose we may do that, and save the trouble of getting their cloths made here, by hav-

ing them made up in London." Drawing on his knowledge of the market, he added, "If I remember, I think the west Country Barge Men have their Jackets made of a strong, cheap cloth, I believe called Foul Weather and the Color being Drab or something like it."[20] No doubt motivated by self-interest as well as genuine concern for his slaves, Habersham was attentive to their physical and spiritual well-being.

Regardless of relatively benign treatment, Habersham's slaves followed lives of endless toil. Once they had cleared and leveled the land, they constructed a complicated series of dams, canals, ditches, and quarter-drains to facilitate the flow of fresh river water into the fields when desired and to protect the fields against unwanted flooding. The most productive rice plantations were located along Georgia's rivers, where the tidal flow raised and lowered the water level, making possible a natural means of watering the rice fields as incoming tides pushed upstream a wall of heavy saltwater that elevated the river's freshwater. Conversely, receding tides dropped the river's level. The tidal flow system worked best in a zone beginning about five to ten miles from the ocean and stretching for about ten more miles inland along the Savannah, the Great Ogeechee, and the Little Ogeechee rivers. First, slaves built an earthen dam that surrounded the rice field, which on large plantations such as Silk Hope was an area from about three hundred to five hundred acres. The height of the levee had to exceed the river level at high tide and had to allow for swollen streams caused by Georgia's heavy rainfalls. Dirt for the dam came from a canal that paralleled the levee, about twenty feet inside it. Approximately five feet across and five feet deep, the ditch was the main conduit by which river water flowed into the field. During harvesting, it also served as a passageway for flatboats used to haul the grain out. Within the large area, slaves laid out individual fields of ten to twenty acres each that could be planted, cultivated, and flooded separately. Within each of the fields, slaves dug drains four feet wide at the top sloping to two feet at the bottom, called force-ditches, which divided the field into one-acre plots. Finally, smaller drains measuring four feet deep and wide sloping to two feet at the bottom, called quarter-drains, subdivided the plots into quarter-acre units.[21]

Planters such as Habersham laid out their rice plantations in individual fields averaging between twenty and thirty acres. They and their overseers scheduled daily tasks by field, determining, for example, which field or fields would be flooded on a given day. Habersham illustrated his intimate knowledge of the process in a 1772 letter to Governor Wright, who was away

on a visit to London. Having agreed to supervise Wright's plantations in his absence, Habersham consulted with Wright's overseer and gave the following detailed report of each field on one of the governor's plantations:

> the 16 Acre field under the Barn at Laurel Grove was cut down and cocked, . . . The Possum or 30 Acre Field under his Garden is also cut down, and to Night most of it will be cocked, . . . and some of the 31 Acre field, where they have cut down about 17 Acres, . . . and the 22 Acre Field is also laid flat, but the lower 16 Acre Field stands tolerably. . . . These I think are all the Rice Fields, that are planted by the Laurel Grove People—at Cedar Hill all the Rice from the Branch, which I think is 27 Acres, is in the Barn Yard, and 18 Acres cut down in the Swamp.[22]

It is clear that the overseer and Habersham were confident that Wright would know intimately every individual field and regarded his holdings by those specific units.

Once the network of dams, canals, and ditches was in place, the final step in preparing the fields for planting was to construct the floodgates and trunks that would allow the planter to regulate the flooding and draining of the fields. The trunks were large wooden culverts that were buried in the levee next to the river "at a level slightly above the usual low-tide mark" and extending to the inner canal. This was the main conduit for flooding and draining river water into and out of the fields. The trunks had wooden "doors or gates at both ends which were so attached that they could either be pulled up or merely loosened and allowed to swing."[23] A slave could operate the gates manually to allow water into the fields, or the system could be set to work automatically. At high tide the pressure of the rising river forced open the outer door and flooded the field. At low tide the falling river level reduced pressure on the door, thus allowing water from the field to drain into the river.

Human behavior as well as natural forces threatened the delicate complex of dams and gates that was essential to an eighteenth-century Georgia rice plantation. In August 1768, Habersham placed an advertisement in the *Georgia Gazette* indicating that he had suffered a "very considerable loss" by persons "driving carts, chairs, and riding on horse-back" over his levees. He notified the public that he had put up gates to prevent further damage and that he was determined not to permit any person to pass over his dam or through his enclosed fields. Suggesting that the culprits were his acquaintances or even friends or neighbors, he expressed his hope that they would

not "put him under the disagreeable necessity of refusing them a passage." He reiterated, however, that he had sustained "intolerable inconvenience" and loss by the actions of trespassers.[24]

Planting followed clearing and ditching. Beginning in March, the slaves made furrows for the rice seed, with each man or woman responsible for a quarter acre per day. The day after preparing the earth, the slaves sowed and covered the seed. For this task, each individual had a daily assignment of half an acre. Once planted, the seeds and subsequent seedlings required a great deal of attention to provide them with the proper amount of nutrients and water and to protect them from weeds. Most Georgia rice planters cultivated their rice fields three or four times during the growing cycle.[25]

Many variables determined the quality and yield of a crop. First, the planters had to exercise care in selecting seed, and they purchased rice seed periodically in order to ensure healthy crops. John Bolzius explained, "in Carolina they have to change the rice seed every third year; otherwise it becomes red and loses its value."[26] A second variable requiring experience and judgment was that of flooding, especially the timing and duration. Most planters flooded their fields four times: the first designed to stimulate germination, the second and third to promote growth of the plants and control weeds, and the last, the "harvest flow," to hold the stalks upright until they reached maturity.[27] The periodic flooding and draining of the rice fields was a matter of judgment as to the timing, duration, and depth of each flooding. Draining occurred in order to allow field hands to cultivate.

Rice harvesting usually began in late August and continued sometimes into early October. When the rice turned white, it was ready for the slaves to cut. They grasped a handful of stalks with one hand, swung the sickle with the other, and gently deposited the sheaves of grain on the stubble. After being allowed to dry for at least twenty-four hours, the sheaves were tied together in bundles and stacked in the fields until they were removed by flatboats along the canals. Once removed from the field, the rice underwent a sorting process whereby wet sheaves were removed from the rest to prevent their spoiling the entire lot while awaiting final processing for the market.[28]

Preparing the rice for market was as labor intensive as planting, cultivating, and harvesting. On many plantations, including Habersham's, the preferred methods were manual operations. The first step was threshing. Slaves beat the grains from the stalks by repeatedly striking the tied sheaves of rice with flailing sticks. Through this process, the grain fell off the stalks

onto the threshing floor, where it was gathered and taken to the winnowing house for the next step. The winnowing house was a square room approximately ten feet on a side situated about fifteen feet atop supporting poles and accessed by outside stairs. When the wind was sufficiently strong, slaves tossed the grain into the air and the wind separated the rice from the chaff or husks. The rice fell through a mesh grating in the middle of the room and fell onto the floor while the lighter chaff blew away. Because the rice, called "rough rice" at this stage, was still in its hard outer shell, it required one more step before it was ready for shipping. Slaves poured the rough rice into a hollowed-out log and then used wooden pestles to pound or grind the outer shell, which blew away as chaff. Further pounding completed the milling process, producing clean white rice ready for market and a fine residual powder known as rice flour.[29]

Habersham sought the most efficient means of removing the husk from the grain. He was dubious of stamping machines, which speeded up the process but, he claimed, did great damage to the rice and diminished its value in the market. Thus, he preferred the older and slower method of slaves polishing the rice by hand with mortars and pestles. On the other hand, his friend John Bolzius viewed the mechanical stamping mill as essential to rice processing as the plow was to cultivation. He described with great satisfaction the completion of the mill at Ebenezer in April 1745. Bored into a long thick beam were seven oval-shaped holes each capable of containing more than a bushel of grain. As the water-powered mill operated, a large pestle fell into each hole, grinding away the husks. Bolzius delighted in watching the operation in which "all seven pestles go as regularly one after the other as if seven men were threshing." In about an hour, the rice is "prepared for use and sale." With his pocket watch, Bolzius timed the stamping process. "In twenty-four hours more than a hundred and fifty bushels of rice can be stamped in these holes," he reported. Moreover, the good news for Georgians with a severe labor shortage was the little effort required of the operator: "a man has no other work than to put the rice or barley into [the holes] and to take his grain out again after the passage of a good hour and to strain it and take it home."[30] After seeing similar machines in operation at William Knox's and Governor Wright's plantations, Habersham concluded that their costs exceeded their benefits. Of Knox's new pounding machine, he said: "the foolish Gimcrack of a Machine for pounding Rice put up at no small Expence . . . is good for nothing, and has besides greatly injured the Barn which appears to have been well put to-

gether and of good Materials. The Barn must be supported with Brick, and I suppose a new Machine made, which will be attended with some Expence." Habersham was more charitable in discussing the pounding machine at one of Governor Wright's plantations, observing that it "beats 6 barrels pr day with Ease," a productivity that he found acceptable.[31]

The planter's final step in preparing rice for shipment was to seal the grain in barrels. Large planters such as Habersham, Graham, and Wright maintained slave coopers who made their own barrels. They kept in their stores a sufficient supply of staves, hoops, and headings for the next crop. One of the reasons they bought the material ahead was to make certain that the wood had time to dry thoroughly. On one occasion, Habersham warned that "it will not do to have green Stuff [i.e., wood] for heading, and for want of attending to this Matter, I have seen a great deal of Rice totally destroyed." If large operators ran out of materials for making barrels, they faced the uncertainty of purchasing barrels from the outside. As he prepared Wright's 1772 harvest for shipment, Habersham worried about the governor's barrel inventory and expressed his opinion that he did "not believe it wou'd be possible to buy rice barrels from the Coopers. I mean so many as you want." Even if they could supply the desired quantity, coopers "would expect more for whole barrels" than the "established Price" of eighteen pence per barrel, which had prevailed for "many years."[32]

Delays in preparing the rice for market could have serious consequences. In 1772, Habersham, along with Governor Wright and John Graham, chartered a ship for transporting their rice to market, each providing one-third of the cargo. Habersham made all the arrangements, directing one of his London correspondents, John Clark, to charter the *Hind* and send it to Savannah early enough in the harvest season for the three planters to get an edge on the market. After the vessel arrived, Habersham, acting as factor for the planters, dispatched schooners to the respective plantations for conveying the rice to the *Hind.* But as Habersham explained in a letter to Wright, when the schooner arrived at the plantation, the captain "found that both you and Mr. Graham wou'd be hard pushed to get your respective Quantities in Time." Consequently, Habersham loaded "114 barrels of my own Rice" and pledged to use his best offices to ship the governor's "full Quota" by pushing his overseers to finish pounding and filling barrels. However, he informed Wright, the delay would have serious consequences, explaining, "it will be impossible for us to get *Hind* loaded within the Time limitted."[33] The time limit he mentioned referred to demurrage, the

amount of time the ship was to be detained in port. On expiration, the planters were liable for a demurrage charge for each day they held up the vessel, a charge that could erase any advantage they had in getting their harvest to an early market.

Shipping to a Profitable Market

Rice production was but half of the planter's challenge in making a profit. He also had to deliver his grain to a profitable market. Thus the planter had to concern himself with an impersonal, remote variable beyond his control. It should be noted that a Georgia rice planter could sell in one of two markets: the spot market at Charlestown or the international market in London. Most of the time there was a close correspondence between the price of rice in South Carolina and Georgia and that in England after adding freight, duties, and other shipping costs. However, at times the price was quite volatile, with international demand either sharply driving up the price in England or precipitating a sharp drop. For example, European demand was exceptionally high for rice produced in 1771, and Charlestown prices soared accordingly, rising successively from 65 shillings per hundredweight in December 1771 to 75 in January 1772, 80 in February, and 90 by June.[34] In such a market, the key for planters was to have intelligence of price movements in advance and to ship their rice at the right time to take advantage of the robust demand. Year in and year out, Habersham had good market intelligence from his London correspondents, the commission merchants who sold his rice and purchased manufactured goods he might have ordered. His correspondents included John Nickleson, John Graham, and John Nutt, all of whom had lived in South Carolina or Georgia and understood rice production and marketing from planting to processing. They knew planters, and they knew London rice dealers. In addition to his correspondents, Habersham gained market information from his good friend and Georgia's agent, William Knox. In fact, Knox himself owned Georgia rice plantations whose general oversight he entrusted to Habersham through power of attorney. A final source of market data was any of Habersham's friends who were in London on business. In winter 1771–72 Henry Laurens of Charlestown and Governor Wright were both in the metropolis and kept Habersham apprised of the rice market. In their absences, Habersham oversaw their rice plantations, and thus they had a personal interest in making sure that he had solid market information.

In October 1771, Laurens wrote Habersham from England advising him of a surging rice market because of high international demand. At the time, the spot price quoted in Charlestown was 66.9 shillings per hundredweight. Laurens wrote, "The principal Thing that I have to communicate is this. I have met good Intelligence here, from whence I am morally certain that our Crops of Rice in So. Carolina and Georgia will *all* be wanted, even admitting that they shall prove to be much more considerable than you and I had any Reason in May or June last to expect they would be."[35] On June 3 Habersham had written Laurens about heavy rains and flooding that had destroyed hundreds of acres including perhaps two-thirds of his own crop. As a result, he thought that 1771 would be a disaster for Georgia planters. Later in the month, Habersham estimated that the crop would "fall short one third at least of what was made the past year." In a letter to the firm Graham & Clark, he informed the correspondents that if they chartered a vessel as planned to be loaded with rice from the plantations of Habersham, John Graham, and Governor Wright, "we shall be put to great difficulty to load her."[36] Laurens's letter brightened prospects considerably. Even with short supplies, high prices could turn a bad harvest into a profitable year. And high prices had a way of increasing the number of barrels that Habersham and other planters could ship. They could find barrels in storage from the previous year's crop, and they could buy rice on the spot market and ship them to London in anticipation of higher prices. Laurens knew that he was conveying information of great strategic importance. He added, "I know that to communicate such intelligence early to a Friend who may have a thousand Barrels or more of his own to sell is my Duty, because I owe him all that is in my Power to do for the Benefit of his own and his Children's Interest." He recommended that Habersham not be "hasty in the Sale of your Crop." Laurens concluded with a warning to Habersham to keep the price information secret lest he give away an otherwise competitive advantage: "If this Advice happens to reach you as it possibly may, before any other of the like Nature, I believe you will benefit by it. But I intreat you to let the Matter rest with you, for in a Business of this Sort when it is talk'd of, One cannot oblige one Friend but at the hazard of disobliging some others and incurring ill grounded Censure."[37]

Having warned Habersham against divulging such valuable market intelligence, Laurens favored his brother, James, and his friend and fellow Charlestown merchant, Gabriel Manigault, with the advance notice. Laurens informed Habersham of his strategy for cashing in on the bullish mar-

ket. "For my own Crops at Altamaha [Laurens's Georgia plantation] (I hope they will be very large)," he intimated, "I have desired as much as possible to be embark'd on my Account in the new Ship *Cowles.* I intreat your Assistance to Capt. Carter in procuring early Rice to fill up his Vessel."[38]

Laurens read the rice market correctly. Demand in Europe was strong over the next two years, driving up the price of rice in South Carolina and Georgia. When Laurens wrote Habersham in October 1771, the Charlestown price stood at 66.9 shillings per hundredweight in South Carolina currency. It steadily rose, reaching a high of 90 shillings per hundredweight by June 1772, where it stayed for most of the rest of that year before it began to fall, returning to the mid-60s by summer 1773.[39]

Habersham took advantage of the intelligence. On February 11, 1772, he shipped more than two hundred barrels of rice to his London correspondent, the house of Graham & Clark. He indicated that the shipment was "principally of my own growth," adding that it included "30 barrells I borrowed." He confessed that the latter was "a little Dull, and slovenly put out of Hand," indicating his eagerness to capitalize on rising prices even if it meant sacrificing a bit on quality. In July, Habersham wrote Governor James Wright, who was in London at the time and advised His Excellency to sell all the rice he could muster from his plantations in order to profit from the "high price in Charlestown." That same month Habersham reported to John Nutt, London merchant in the Carolina trade, that his annual income had for several years been "about £2000 Sterling," and no doubt because of his benefiting from a strong market and early market intelligence, he indicated that it was "lately more."[40]

Profits depended on three factors: production costs, market prices, and shipping expenses. Habersham reckoned his production costs to be low because the upkeep of slaves was, in his estimate, negligible. For the most part, slaves grew their own food and, besides an occasional order for clothing, required little expenditure of cash for their maintenance. Habersham's capital outlay was minimal. Farm buildings and dams cost little because his slaves provided the labor, and his skepticism of mechanical husking devices further reduced his investment.

Although he could control production costs, Habersham was at the mercy of distant markets for the price of his grain. And prices fluctuated over time, sometimes with great volatility. When he and Francis Harris began their business in 1743, prices were in a sharp downturn, primarily because of disruptions attendant to the War of the Austrian Secession, which

had interrupted the rice trade since 1740. Prices rebounded after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 and, with few exceptions, trended higher until the American Revolution once again disrupted the rice trade. Indeed, the market was good to Habersham. From 1756, when Habersham acquired his first tract of land to begin rice cultivation, he enjoyed rising prices with the exception of a sharp but brief drop after the Peace of Paris (1763) closed the French and Indian War.[41]

Just as prices fluctuated, costs associated with selling and shipping rice varied as well. Freight was a significant expense. In a December 20, 1771, letter advising Habersham of market conditions in London, Henry Laurens reported that freight charges were 70 shillings sterling per ton to Holland. He cited the cost to Holland because that was a country where demand for English grain was particularly high. Laurens also estimated that Habersham could expect a price of 10 shillings sterling per hundredweight. Thus, a ton of rice would bring 10 pounds sterling, which meant that freight represented 35 percent of the price. Insurance was another cost that had to be considered in profitability. On that front, Laurens warned Habersham that in making profit projections he must consider the "probability of a War with Spain" and what "even the Effect which a bare Rumour of War may have upon Insurance." Volatile and uncertain insurance costs meant a "Rise or fall upon either Side" of Lauren's optimistic estimates. One cost that Habersham would not incur in 1771 was the payment of taxes because Parliament had granted a tax abatement to planters to encourage production.

Though no calculations of Habersham's profitability in the rice trade have survived, he has left enough clues to venture an estimate of his return on investment. In a letter dated July 31, 1772, to London merchant John Nutt, he stated that his annual income, net of taxes, freight, and selling and shipping costs, "has been for some years past about £2000 Sterling, and lately more."[42] William DeBrahm estimated the total investment for a rice plantation with forty slaves to be about 2,500 pounds; therefore, by extrapolation we can estimate Habersham's investment in three plantations with nearly two hundred slaves to be about 12,500 pounds sterling. Because DeBrahm did not allow for the natural increase of the planter's slave population and because he assumed that all the land was purchased, his estimates probably overstate Habersham's actual investment. Nonetheless, Habersham's annual net income of two thousand pounds represented a return of over fifteen percent.

Such a return enabled James Habersham to amass enough wealth to be-

come one of colonial Georgia's richest residents. His annual income of two thousand pounds sterling would have placed him comfortably within England's landed gentry. More importantly to him, his estate was sufficient to provide a legacy for his three sons that secured their positions among Georgia's leading men.

CHAPTER SIX

Savannah

Georgia Gentleman

When James Habersham left Silk Hope and moved to Savannah in the early 1760s, he returned to the town where he had resided on arriving in 1738 and where he had established his mercantile business in 1743. The move was also symbolic, moving from an alien world of plantation agriculture back home to the commercial universe he knew so well. Though he was a successful planter, he remained a merchant, and he would spend the rest of his life helping his sons launch their own enterprises in overseas trade.

In a letter to William Knox, Habersham explained his decision to return to Savannah. First, he said, "I find the Rice Field pernicious to my Health." Increasingly, he suffered in the hot, humid Georgia summers, succumbing, in particular, to the miasmic rice fields. Accordingly, he entrusted the management of his plantation to his overseer and reduced his oversight to a minimum, indicating "that I scarcely go through it once in a Season." Habersham's second reason for moving back to Savannah was family concerns. The last few years at Silk Hope had witnessed a radical change in his family. To one correspondent, Habersham wrote, "my wife and several of my Children have dyed . . . , and my remaining 3 Children being settled, two here and one in London, I left the Country, and now reside almost wholly in this Town." He wanted to be close to his sons so he could assist them in establishing themselves professionally. Moreover, Savannah was the seat of government, and as president of the Council, Habersham had a "Load of public Concerns" to shoulder.[1]

Shortly after moving back to Savannah, Habersham reflected on his life in Georgia, revealing much about how he viewed himself and his various private and public roles. He saw himself primarily as a businessman rather than as a planter. In a letter to a London correspondent who had asked him to expatiate on Georgia gardens and crops, Habersham demurred, saying that he had little "knowledge of, or particular Passion for the cultivating of

Plants." At the same time, he acknowledged his admiration for those who dedicated themselves to improving agriculture in the province. He believed that their efforts were both profitable to themselves and beneficial to society. "I revere and esteem Men who act out of the narrow Sphere of Self," he wrote, "and communicate their Knowledge for usefull Improvements for the Public good." He explained his lack of agricultural expertise by pointing out that he had been from youth to "near 50 years of age unavoidably immersed in commercial Business, which never allowed me Time to think much of other matters."[2]

When Habersham first moved to Silk Hope in the 1750s, he set about developing a country estate with many of the amenities found in English country homes. He explained: "I built a comfortable House, and being desirous of making it agreeable to myself and Family, I laid out a spot of ground of about 7 or 8 Acres at some Expense, under the direction of an English Gardener."[3] He lived on his country estate for only about ten years. Now, instead of being a country gentleman, Habersham reported that he was a "perfect Citizen of Savannah," living in his "neat and comfortable Habitation" on Bull Street in Johnson Square.[4]

Habersham returned to a place he had helped transform from a slow-moving village to a busy port. As he walked along Savannah's riverfront in the 1770s, he observed the changes that had elevated the town from the shabby, decaying community Governor John Reynolds had described on his arrival in 1755. Reynolds had estimated Georgia's population then as "not above three thousand Men, Women, and Children, in an extent of Country of a Hundred Miles by Two Hundred." Savannah consisted of an estimated 150 houses, "most of them Old . . . and many of them Decayed." He learned firsthand the degree of rot in buildings constructed of untreated lumber subjected to climatic extremes when "the largest House in the Town fell down whilst I was sitting in Council in it."[5] As Habersham surveyed Savannah in 1775, he saw vitality instead of decay, brick instead of lumber. He saw "numerous wharves" with facilities for loading, unloading, and storing cargo, and he must have remembered with great satisfaction that his private wharf had been the first designed specifically for overseas trade. The wharves' quality would have caught Habersham's eye as he viewed the new structures with their stone cellars and storehouses, a vast improvement over the "rude wooden" buildings of earlier years. In 1774, he could view with pride the arrival and departure of thirty-five vessels owned by Georgians, more than triple the number just a decade earlier. Again, he and Francis

Harris had been among the first in the province to purchase ships, primarily for the coastal and West Indian trade. And Habersham no doubt swelled with pride as he read William Brown's report for 1772–73. Savannah's customs collector noted that 217 vessels cleared the port as compared to 37 in 1760–61.[6] Though it still lagged behind Charlestown as a shipping center, Savannah was emerging as an important port, the culmination of three decades of growth spurred in large part by the forward thinking of James Habersham and a handful of other merchants and planters.

When Habersham walked from the riverfront to his house on Bull Street in Johnson Square, he would have noticed other signs of progress in the town he had once despaired of surviving the trustee period. There were numerous retail stores selling "just about anything from Jamaican rum to 'a very genteel eight-day clock.'" Again, he had been the pioneer in opening direct trade between London and Savannah, enabling Georgians to purchase the latest English consumer goods at reasonable prices instead of paying a surcharge for having them transshipped from Charlestown. New stores dotted the streets off the waterfront as local merchants sought to satisfy the demand created by a population that had reached 3,500 in 1774, more than triple that of 1761. Although the assortments in Savannah's shops still did not match those in the South Carolina port, one "could live quite comfortably with what was offered." That is, most inhabitants could. Scholars describing colonial Savannah have often cited Habersham as an exception. According to one, Habersham "was accustomed to dressing in silk. As he could not find a decent tailor in Savannah, he was reduced to ordering his clothes from Charles Town, even though it pained him greatly to do so."[7]

Leaving the commercial district, Habersham would have passed several fine houses as he entered Savannah's residential squares. He could check on the progress of James Jr.'s new house, which was under construction. Once completed, the large two-story Georgian mansion on Reynolds Street would be a befitting residence for a prosperous planter and merchant. The elder Habersham lived next to his friend John Graham, who owned a "large two-storied structure with a fine balcony in front and a piazza that ran the length of the house." With ten rooms the house required an army of servants to "cater to his family's needs." The staff consisted of a "coachman, hairdresser, tailor, two waiting boys, two children's women, 3 cooks, a steward, a groom, 3 washerwomen, a midwife, and a couple of house wenches." Habersham's own place was relatively modest, built at a cost of five hundred

pounds sterling in 1763 after his wife died. Its interior, however, befitted the owner's status. Most conspicuous was the portrait of himself that Habersham had commissioned Jeremiah Theus to paint. To own and display a self-portrait by the "noted Charles Town artist" was to represent oneself as a member of Savannah's ruling elite.[8]

Though a provincial backwater compared to Charlestown, Savannah offered Habersham several social and cultural amenities. The town sported "numerous taverns," which would become rallying points for Georgia's revolutionaries. Habersham delighted in good wine, but more than likely he drank it primarily at his home or that of a friend or at the St. Andrews social club to which he belonged. He also enjoyed good food and no doubt was drawn to the stalls displaying local farmers' fresh fruits and vegetables displayed in Ellis Square. He was an avid reader of newspapers, including the *Georgia Gazette,* founded by James Johnston in 1763, and the *South Carolina Gazette,* to which he subscribed and occasionally contributed articles. In addition, Habersham had access to Savannah's three public libraries, which supplemented the holdings in his private collection, with its emphasis on evangelical religious works. He must have had moments of nostalgia when he passed the old filature where he had promoted the production of silk. In 1774 the building was being refurbished for "concerts, lectures, theatricals, and balls." A smaller theater was located on Broughton Street.[9]

Nearby Habersham's house in Johnson Square was Christ Church. Though he had been one of the Church of England's severest critics, he was now one of its staunchest defenders. As a member of the Council he had supported a law "for Establishing Religious Worship [in every Georgia parish] . . . according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England."[10] He was a prominent member of Christ Church, occupying pew 25 in a section reserved for Savannah's first citizens. Indeed, his pew was adjacent to the pew of John Graham, his neighbor on Bull Street and the colony's second wealthiest planter.[11] Habersham had mellowed in his religious outlook over the years and was no longer the fanatic who publicly taunted the priest for knowing nothing of "true" Christianity. His latitudinarian views are most poignantly captured in a 1770 letter to his son Joseph. He urged Joseph to think for himself regarding political issues, following "your own convictions, and free from parental Influences." Then, he added, "this rule ought to be observed in Religious matters."[12]

Although an advocate of freedom of conscience, Habersham saw the value of a religious establishment for promoting a harmonious society.

Though he believed persons ought to decide religious issues for themselves, he thought that the Church of England ought to define public worship. He expressed that view while spearheading the drive for a college in Georgia. He used his political influence to promote George Whitefield's efforts to convert the orphanage school into a college until the archbishop of Canterbury ended that scheme by insisting that the headmaster be an Anglican minister. Whitefield refused to acquiesce to the archbishop's demands because he thought that the school should be founded on a "broad bottom," reflecting the diverse religious views of its donors. After Whitefield's death in 1770, Habersham joined the effort to expand the orphanage into a college, an initiative that resulted in the opening of Bethesda College, or Lady Huntingdon College as it became known. Unlike his deceased friend, however, Habersham thought that the president should "be of the established church" because he would then "have access to the Pulpit in the Church in [Savannah], and indeed in every other Parish in this Province."[13] The narrow sectarian had blossomed into a broad churchman.

Regrettably, Habersham's dreams for a permanent college in Georgia went up in smoke. In a June 3, 1773, letter to Lady Huntingdon, one of Bethesda's most generous benefactors, he reported the sad news: "Last Sabbath day evening—being Whitsunday, Bethesda College, with the very neat chapple adjoining it, was totally burnt down." Having been involved with Bethesda for a quarter century from its establishment, he reflected on the struggle. He wrote, "This Institution has met with many very many checks and disappointments, I may say to appearance sentences of Death, upon it, but this last is truly humiliating and a heavy stroke indeed."[14] Though he would not see higher education firmly secured in Georgia, his offspring would. After his death, Habersham's sons James and John were instrumental in founding the University of Georgia, both serving as trustees. As an apprentice, James Habersham had been unable to attend university in England, but James Habersham Jr., Esq., planter and merchant, played a role in establishing what would become the first state university in America.

Gentleman

Habersham had become a gentleman and was so regarded on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the hallmarks of eighteenth-century English gentlemen was self-fashioning, manifested in such performances as portraits,

processions, and entertainment. In 1772, Habersham commissioned well-known Charlestown artist Jeremiah Theus to paint his portrait. The portrait is very much a self-representation, with the subject presenting himself as he wanted to be thought of and remembered: a prosperous, though modest, gentleman whose wealth and position are understated.[15] At the time of this sitting, Habersham had risen to the top of Georgia society and politics. One of the top three landowners and slaveholders and the acting governor of the province, Habersham had few peers in the southernmost colony. He enjoyed the trappings of wealth and power, maintaining a fine house on Johnson Square in Savannah as well as his countryseat at Silk Hope. Yet he retained his Methodist roots and was uncomfortable with any display that suggested undue attachment to things of "this world." His desire to present himself as a gentleman in subdued tones is evidenced by the clothes he is wearing in the portrait. First, they were tailored in London because, in his words, locally tailored suits had been disappointing, "spoiled by the Bunglers" who made garments for provincials. But in ordering a new suit, Habersham had attempted to steer a middle way in style, declaring, "I would not be quite in, neither would I be quite out of the fashion." He directed the metropolitan tailor to provide a "Cuff on the Sleeve . . . decent for a Man of my years," but he insisted that the "Trimmings of the Coat [be] quite plain, I mean the Buttons of the same Colour with the Coat."[16]

While the portrait says much about James Habersham, including his penchant for overeating, it reveals little about his remarkable ascent to the top of Georgia society. The intelligent eyes peering out from the portrait suggest that he possessed enormous personal gifts that he put to good advantage. And the pleasant expression on his open face indicates an affability that others must have found engaging. While hinting at personal traits that contributed to Habersham's achievements, the painting lacks context. The soft, plain background suits the artist's need to highlight the sole subject of the portrait. However, it offers nothing of the setting that is essential for explaining Habersham's success. There is no hint that he was a Georgian, living in a time and place that afforded enterprising pioneers great opportunity as well as daunting difficulty. And there are none of the people that were essential to his rise from obscurity, including the almost two hundred slaves whose labor enabled him to live as a gentleman.

When Habersham commissioned his portrait, he also engaged Theus to paint "a series of portraits," including "half-lengths and miniatures" of himself and of his daughter-in-law. Such an extravagance reflected his relative

wealth in society. He paid fifty pounds sterling for the portrait, a sum equal to an English vicar's annual income. He sent his sister a set of the miniatures via his London correspondent, adding, "it is more than probable, that she may never see either of the Originals." Habersham fussed over the portraits, knowing that they would adorn his home in Savannah as well as those of family members on both sides of the Atlantic. He characterized the portraits as "indifferent Likenesses." Habersham said that "my Daughter has a Delicacy about her Face that no Painter has yet hit upon, altho' attempted by different Persons in half lengths and Miniature." He added that his own portrait "has certainly a very gruff and surly Appearance, especially about the Mouth, which my Friends say is not like me." He expressed his hope that such an unflattering countenance was not "an Indication of my Heart."[17]

At least one Georgian sneered at Habersham's gentlemanly pretensions. To John Dobell, who now occupied the post of schoolmaster that Habersham held on arriving in 1738, Savannah's grandees preened themselves as self-appointed aristocrats who had forgotten their humble origins. In a rambling critique, Dobell wrote:

> the Circumstances My Lord of Savannah what with those that Trim [change positions according to expediency, blow first one way and then the other], and what with those that Userp is at present as little pleasant as prosperous: Pride and Poverty have a great while went hand in hand, but Pride has now, I think, gotten the start, and a Spirit of Gentility seems to be gone forth and seized the Brains of the meanest whereby some are intoxicated to no small degree, and 'tis a rare thing to converse with those People without soon hearing from them an Attestation of the Goodness of their Birth and Liberalness of their Education, as if they fancied themselves equal to the Children of Nobles.

From criticism elsewhere, it is clear that Dobell included Habersham in that portrayal.[18]

Dobell's criticism notwithstanding, Habersham was a person of considerable social standing in Savannah whose station could be discerned on any public occasion. For instance, the death of a prominent Georgian, Major William Horton, commandant at Frederica, served to display Savannah's ordered society. John Bolzius noted, "the funeral was held in accordance with the social standing of the major and was probably not inexpensive. It proceeded very orderly and piously, both in regard to the procession of the wealthy and those of lesser social position following the coffin into the

church, and also in the churchyard and back to the house of Mr. Habersham, the merchant, the place from which the body was carried."[19] Indeed, Habersham's house was frequently the scene of public occasions. When distinguished visitors from Germany arrived in Savannah to visit their countrymen at Ebenezer, Habersham held a reception at his house and invited Bolzius to receive them there.[20]

One's residence in Savannah provided a constant visual reminder of one's social position. By 1765, Habersham had moved into his brick house on Bull Street. He reckoned the total cost to be five hundred pounds sterling, which understates the market value because his slaves made the bricks, and he was able to purchase materials at wholesale through his mercantile connections. To put Habersham's residence in perspective, one can compare it with those of other notables. As Governor Henry Ellis prepared to leave the colony in 1760, he moved into private quarters, "a large house that the Assembly has bought for 400 pounds from the Attorney General." Before he departed, he had built on one side of the city near the Savannah River "on a piece of land given him by the Assembly a house with several outbuildings and a wall of planks, earth, and palisades all around it like a small fortress." This place cost him five hundred pounds, the same amount Habersham paid for his new home. Ellis intended his house as an investment and planned to lease it to a hotelier who agreed to pay him fifty pounds interest annually. At the same time, Chief Justice Mr. William Grover planned to depart Georgia for England, and he too owned a house built for five hundred pounds sterling. Like Ellis, he wished to rent his "comfortable house" in order to provide income for him to live "in quietude on a small estate" in England.[21] Judging Habersham's house strictly on the basis of cost, the secretary of Georgia maintained a residence suitable for the colony's political and social elite.

Georgia gentlemen enjoyed a number of diversions to amuse themselves. They played games, in particular enjoying tenpins and skittle ball.[22] Horse racing was also popular in Georgia.[23] Habersham's tastes ran more to the parlor than to the field. He enjoyed the conviviality of his gentlemen's club, the St. Andrews Society. Organized in 1750, the club held an annual banquet that was a highlight on Savannah's social calendar. In a 1771 letter to a London correspondent, Habersham anticipated that year's dinner with a lively sense of humor: "Tomorrow I am to dine with a merry Saint, St Andrew, I am a member of the Society, and as I am told our Friend John Graham will preside there, I am of Opinion, he will send many of the Saints Votaries away with Sare Heads. I do not mean that our Friend John likes

Sare Heads, because I know him to be one of the most temperate and at the same time one of the best Hearted Men in this Province, but for the Honor of his Saint and Country, I think he will on this Occasion particularly exert himself."[24] Though the letter was to a business associate, Habersham obviously delighted in contemplating Graham's roast at the festivity.

Habersham was also something of a wine connoisseur. As a merchant, he learned the wine market and imported pipes of the best Madeira. He purchased wine for his own table and as gifts for his best friends. Frequently he sent choice stock to George Whitefield, who also appreciated good wine. On one such occasion, he told Whitefield that he was sending a "quarter Cask Maidera Wine, which I think extremely good." As proof that the wine was special, Habersham explained that it had aged perfectly. But, more importantly, he had firsthand knowledge, attesting with confidence derived only from personal enjoyment, assuring Whitefield, "the wine, I know, is extraordinary."[25]

With their newfound wealth, Georgia gentlemen took advantage of what has been called a "consumer revolution" to stay current with the latest London fashions. With his commercial connections in the metropolis, Habersham was well positioned to keep track of the latest styles and, if they pleased him, to place orders. In November 1767 he gave a correspondent detailed instructions for a new suit:

> I want a *dress,* plain and grave Coloured Silk Coat. A black silk Waistcoat without sleeves, one pair of fine frame knit silk stocking Breeches, and two pair of the finest frame knit black worsted stocking Breeches, as the best are the cheapest for common use. I chuse black Breeches, as they suit my coloured Coat, and I want the Black silk Waistcoat to attend funerals in Summer, for in that hot season, I always wear holland Jackets, except on these solemn occasions.[26]

He was primarily concerned that the clothing suit Georgia's hot climate, fit properly, and conform to fashion for a man of his age and standing. He enclosed a swatch of silk grogram from a coat that he had worn during the past three summers. He explained that he liked the color, "because I think it suitable for a man of near 55 years of age, and I *only* send it on account of the color, that you may know, what I mean by *grave.*" The sample did not, however, represent the kind of cloth he desired. "I think it coarse," he wrote, "and would have something finer." He emphasized that the fabric must be strong but "as light as possible, and that the Taylor

should particularly notice, that Cloaths cannot *possibly be made too light and airy for Summer* wear here." Habersham wanted to be fashionable, but did not want to be considered a fop, eschewing such adornments as gold buttons.[27]

Proper fit was of utmost concern. He asked Knox to "employ your own Taylor, and I would have him keep my Measure by him" for future reference. He sent a coat and breeches for Knox to "direct as far as I can the *size.*" Noting that he had grown a bit bulky, Habersham said that the coat "is not cut quite full enough over the Breast" and is too short in both the sleeves and the skirts. Fearing that he was continuing to "grow more Bulky," he instructed Knox to "have about an Inch let in on each side of the Coat and Jackett to let out." He also pointed out that he was "a little round shouldered" and therefore could not wear a coat that was pinched in the shoulders. As for the breeches, Habersham did not want them lined, adding, "we all wear Drawers here." Perhaps thinking of some previous embarrassment, he emphasized the need "to line the Seams with something strong."[28]

Habersham wanted the new clothes to wear to the king's birthday celebration on June 4, and he wanted to make certain that they arrived on time and in good condition. As a merchant he was aware of damages that could befall clothing in a long shipment, so he instructed Knox to tell the ship's captain to hang his garments in the captain's cabin or "in some as dry place in the Ship." He explained that he had seen other suits, especially those made of silk, "spotted by the Heat of the Hold."[29]

When the garments arrived the following spring, Habersham was quite pleased. In a letter to Robert Keen, a London merchant whom Knox had entrusted with the order, Habersham wrote, "The cloth you were so kind as to provide is of a good colour and appears to be of the best quality, and the Taylors work is well done." The fit though left something to be desired. "I find it difficult for a Person at a distance," he added, "to fit so easy or so well as may be done when he takes Personal measures, especially with a person growing in years." He added, "Of late I have grown fat, I think too much, and too quickly so, which is not very pleasing to me, tho' I cannot say, I yet feel much inconvenience from it, however the cloths I had made 6 months ago, I cannot now bear on my back." He was pleased that the tailor had anticipated change over time, and he thanked Keen for giving "me room enough, and with some small alterations I think they will do very well."[30] Habersham had long suffered from gout, which no doubt added to the discomfort of clothes that fit too tightly around his swollen joints.

For most of his years in Georgia, Habersham wore a wig, a sure sign of gentility. Yet he was an individual unafraid of public opinion, and he felt confident enough to stop the practice in the name of comfort. He told his son Joe, "I wore a Wig from the age of 16 'till I was upward of 51 years of age." But, he added, "I found [wearing a wig] very troublesome in the hot and trying Climate, and since I have let my hair grow for about 7 years past." Maybe a gentleman without a wig would have caused a stir in London, but in Savannah, he attested, "I have scarcely ever found the least inconvenience from it."[31]

In addition to stylish appearance, another means of self-fashioning among English gentlemen was a well-stocked library. According to DeBrahm, Georgia's gentlemen, despite their lack of education, were tied to the print culture centered in London. He observed that most Georgians were people with "very little Education; [but] some by reading good authors only, acquire real Knowledge and great Wisdom." He described the process by which self-educated Georgians gained culture and refinement. Most, he noted, entered adulthood without any education other "than reading and writing." But after "acquiring Estates" and "being in easy Circumstances of Life" and "not as yet debauched by European Luxuries, such as Balls, Masquerades, Operas, Plays etc, they applied themselves to reading good Authors."[32] DeBrahm's description applies only partially to Habersham. He arrived with a little more education than most Georgians. In addition to reading and writing, he was skilled in accounting and had at least a rudimentary knowledge of Latin. After acquiring his estate, though, Habersham did not live a life of great leisure characteristic of DeBrahm's mature gentleman. He remained very active in both public service and private business. And his practical bent inclined him more toward improving present circumstances for himself, his sons, and the colony rather than reflecting on literary and philosophical works from the past. He had expressed his opinion that Princeton was too much concerned with teaching students the former while neglecting the latter.

DeBrahm was struck by the ready availability and widespread extent of books in the colonies in general and Georgia in particular. He said there is "scarcely a House in the Cities, Towns or Plantations, but what have some choice Authors, if not Libraries of Religious, Philosophical, and Political Writers." He noted, "booksellers endeavour to import the newest Editions, and take Care to commission the best, well knowing they will not incumber their Shops long, but soon find Admirers and Purchasers." Habersham's

reading preferences tended toward evangelical works and treatises on practical affairs. In addition, he was an avid reader of newspapers, subscribing to the local *Georgia Gazette* as well as Charlestown weeklies: the *South-Carolina Gazette,* the *South Carolina and American General Gazette,* and even the *South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal,* a Whig paper.[33]

Entertainment was a hallmark of a Georgia gentleman, and Habersham extended hospitality to his friends, both those who lived in Savannah and those from elsewhere. When he learned that Henry Laurens was planning a trip to Savannah in 1765, Habersham invited him to stay with him: "I shall be extremely glad to see you, and if you will do me the favour to accept of a Bed and such Accommodations as my House affords, I shall esteem it a favour."[34] Later, to Governor Wright, who was in London, Habersham offered lodging and reminded his friend, "You know I have Servants, that know how to spread a Table handsomely." Without question hospitality served the purpose of cementing commercial and political relationships, but it also was an expression of friendship among gentlemen. Such was the case when he invited the governor to his home: "I give you this Invitation," Habersham explained, "not as a Matter of Form, but from the bottom of my Heart."[35]

Habersham's notion of a proper social order made him alert to those elements in society that posed a threat to his class's sensibilities. Some newcomers streaming into Georgia's interior in particular struck him as socially undesirable. While he was acting governor in 1772, he issued a proclamation prohibiting Georgians, especially backcountry settlers, from making land transactions with the Creeks because unscrupulous white settlers had cheated the natives in previous dealings, giving the latter a grievance that threatened warfare. He described a group of troublemakers as "several idle People from the Northward, some of whom . . . are great Villains, Horse thieves &c, and were among the North Carolina regulators." The last reference reflected Habersham's political judgment as much as his social sensibility. He had little respect for those who opposed governmental authority, particularly those who resorted to violence, as the North Carolina regulators had done. He used his own authority to rid Georgia of "those Straglers" who infiltrated the frontier, dismissing them as "Persons who have no settled habitation, and live by hunting and plundering the industrious Settlers." He expressed his opinion to Governor Wright that they were "by no means the sort of People that should settle those Lands, and I hope the Step I have taken will be effectual to remove them as idle and dis-

orderly Vagrants." Habersham valued industry and order and had no intention of permitting the spread of idleness and disorder, which had plagued Georgia from early settlement. He concluded with a pejorative assessment that obviously was familiar to Georgia gentlemen: "You will easily distinguish, that the People I refer to are really what you and I understand by Crackers."[36]

In a letter to John Moultrie, governor of East Florida, Habersham expressed his hope that the right kind of people would settle southern Georgia in St. Mary's Parish along the Altamaha River. Ceded by Britain after the French and Indian War and attached to Georgia, the region offered rice planters land at a time when available land elsewhere in the province was scarce. The key to developing the area, according to Habersham, was to attract industrious settlers who would develop it to full potential. He was delighted to inform Moultrie that the prospects were bright. "I have understood," he wrote, "that some Persons of Strength intend to move to the Southward."[37] That meant persons of financial strength whose capital matched their energy and ambition. Those were the "right kind" of people for the Georgia Habersham envisioned.

As a Georgia gentleman, Habersham increasingly sought ties to his homeland. As we have seen, he followed London fashions and wished to have his clothes made in the metropolis. He also surrounded himself with goods that an English gentleman might possess. In 1772, he wrote Isabella Wright, the governor's daughter, who was in England with her father, and asked her to "send me a Gold Finch, and a Linnet or two." Habersham used the occasion to express his tender feelings toward the girl, who no doubt reminded him of his deceased daughters. "By these little feathered Innocents," he said, "I may fancy myself conversing with you." Seven months later, Habersham informed Isabella that only one of the birds survived the voyage. He said that the goldfinch and one of the linnets died in the passage but that the ship's captain delivered him "a very fine linnet." He referred to it as "my little sweet Songster, who is my close Companion."[38]

Like their English counterparts, Georgia gentlemen had servants to wait on them. The difference, of course, was that the American servants were often slaves. Habersham clearly viewed slaves as assets to be bought, sold, and bequeathed at the will of their masters. Yet he, perhaps more than most slaveholders, regarded bondspersons as humans. He frequently spoke of individual slaves in warm terms. On one occasion he assured Isabella Wright that he was being attentive to her servants in her absence. He informed her

that he saw her servant Peter every Sunday and reported that he was doing well. He assured her that "I do not let them want any little Trifles, they ask me for, and they are very modest in their requests." In a comment that captures both the hard reality of slavery with its endless toil and slaveholders' paternalism toward individuals, Habersham told Isabella, "Peggy found the field Work at first a little hard, but she is now reconciled to it, and behaves well, as does Amey." He concluded by explaining his reasons for dwelling on the slaves, "I mention them, because I suppose it will give you Pleasure to hear, that your old House Servants are well and conduct themselves properly."[39]

Being a gentleman in colonial Georgia did not mean a life of leisure. Unlike English lords of manors who lived off passive income, successful colonial planters were active in overseeing the affairs of their operations, striving to maximize productivity. Habersham was no exception. Indeed, his schedule was a demanding round of tending to private pursuits and public affairs. He continued to be a not-so-silent partner in numerous mercantile interests while being the proprietor of several highly profitable rice plantations. And as president of the Council, he was at the center of provincial government.

By 1765, Habersham thought seriously of leaving Georgia, complaining that he no longer wished to endure the long, hot summers. After visiting his son Joe at Princeton, he told a New Jersey host that he often thought of moving to that more favorable climate. "I have resided in this Colony now near 28 years," he wrote Richard Stockton of Princeton, "and as the Heat, for 3 or 4 months every year has so much debilitated my Constitution, that I dread the Approaching summer, you must suppose I wish to retire to some more equal and temperate Climate." He said that during the previous summer and fall he had particularly suffered from alternating heat and cold, and "seriously thought of measures to remove to my Native Country."[40] Five years later he was still in Savannah and still thinking about leaving. In a similar but updated explanation, he echoed his concerns of 1765: "I have now been near 33 years in this trying Climate, and find, that the Powers of both my Body and Mind are greatly debilitated, and by the excessive enervating Heat more than keeps pace with the natural Infirmities of growing years."[41]

Habersham did not move from Savannah to New Jersey or return to England. If he had thought only of his desires, no doubt he would have. But as he explained to a friend in New Jersey, "only the Consideration that I would do better for my Children here, than there, prevented my coming to a resolution to quit this Colony." Expanding on his reasons, he added, "In

short the more I thought of it, the more Difficulty presented. I am so connected here, and the almost impossibility of converting any considerable landed estate here into Cash in any reasonable Time, unless for perhaps a third of its value, made me drop any further Consideration on that subject for the Present."[42] In other words, he vowed to remain in Georgia, where he could most ably provide land, labor, and capital for his sons to become successful planters and merchants. Indeed, Habersham spent much of his time, energy, and financial resources during his last ten years helping his three sons become established gentlemen. He wanted them to start their adult lives at the lofty station he had attained after a lifetime of effort. Nonetheless, he continued to fantasize about escaping the heat and hard work of Savannah, "to break loose and make a Visit to England in a year or two."[43] It was a trip he would never take.

Spouse and Father

Life in mid-eighteenth-century Georgia could be cruel, and Habersham experienced his share of pain. Dreaded diseases such as smallpox and dysentery on occasion swept through Savannah, claiming scores of lives as defenseless men and women could do little but watch and pray and perhaps flee the town. On at least two occasions, disease struck the Habersham family. James's friend John Bolzius described one sad and painful moment as helpless parents watched their children succumb. He recorded in his diary on July 15, 1748, that James Habersham "unexpectedly lost his gifted and beloved little daughter to death, which caused much grief to both parents." He discussed the rapid onset and development of the dysentery that killed her. "Within a few days the little girl had been healthy, sick, and dead," he wrote, explaining that "red dysentery with high fever is making the rounds in Savannah, a disease that put an early end to the girl's life." A week later he reported the death of the younger Habersham daughter. Within an eight-day period, Habersham mourned the deaths of both his beloved daughters.[44] At a time when he was amassing wealth and power, he watched helplessly as microbes beyond his detection or control devastated his family.

Fifteen years later, Habersham's wife fell victim to smallpox and died on January 4, 1763. For more than twenty years, they had enjoyed a loving relationship, one that Habersham referred to in tender terms. In a letter to a New York friend after Mary's death, Habersham described his marriage as one of "Mutual Love" and described his loss with "Feelings only known to a tender Husband."[45]

Habersham found solace in his friendship with Governor Wright. The two men had been close political allies since Wright's arrival in 1760. But it was the loss of their wives that deepened their personal relationship. In a letter dated October 10, 1764, Habersham informed a London correspondent that an ominous report recently arriving in Savannah indicated that the governor's wife may have died in an accident while sailing to England. "Our present Tranquility is greatly alloyed," he wrote, "by the (I fear) Loss of our Worthy Governors Lady and two Daughters." It was later confirmed that Sarah Wright and her daughters had indeed perished at sea in a shipwreck on their passage to London. Empathizing with Wright, Habersham added, "What a stroke is this to the poor Gentleman!" No doubt feeling the recent loss of his own wife, he declared, "There are few such good wives, tender Mothers and affectionate Friends remaining!" Then he concluded with an expression of his religious faith: "But we must not repine, least we charge God foolishly." Their shared grief drew Habersham and Wright into a close and mutually supportive friendship. Habersham claimed that the governor "appears to have a Friendship and Confidence in me, and therefore I have of late been as much with him as possible and I really feel so much with and for him, that I almost forget I have any Concerns of my own to attend to."[46]

Ironically, Habersham had written Sarah Wright just before he learned of the shipwreck, confiding in her his lingering grief over his wife Mary's death. He assured her that he visited the governor almost daily and that the two men planned a trip "to regale ourselves with viewing the fertile Banks of the great Ogeechee River." Then in a very personal reflection that events would soon infuse with eerie meaning he wrote, "I must own their seems to be a Vacuum in your House; and I can truly sympathize with the Governor in his present tho' temporary State of Widowhood."[47]

Seven years after Mary's death, James continued to feel her loss deeply. Again, it was the death of a friend's wife that evoked new expressions of love for his own wife. In a letter to his friend and business associate, Henry Laurens, he wrote in 1770, "I do not find myself at all disposed to listen or attend to any Sort of Business." He poured out his feelings in a long expression of grief:

> I have not yet got quite out of that dejected State in which from the Death of my Dear Wife and for a long Time after I was overwhelmed, and which I need not attempt to describe to you whose Heart has been wrung, whose Days and Nights have been imbitter'd by similar Distress, whose Soul is ever sympathizing with the Afflicted, who knows too well from past Experience, what I

> must have suffer'd, from two Months painful Anxiety, now hoping, now desponding, and at length from the fatal Blow which took from me, a faithful bosom Friend, a Friend and dear Companion, full of Sincerity, free from every Degree of Guile, ever ardently striving to keep me happy, studying every Moment for means to soften the Cares of my more rugged Path, who in Sickness and in Health was always loving, cherishing, and ready to obey, who never once, no not *once,* during the Course of twenty Years most intimate Connection, threw the Stumbling Block of Opposition or Controversy in my Way, to whom in that great Part of our short Span of Existence, I never had Cause to impute any other Fault than that of an Excess of Goodness, Condescension, & Charity.[48]

On another occasion, the deaths of slaves triggered for Habersham sentimental memories of his wife. During a smallpox outbreak in 1764, he reported the deaths of "6 fine able Negroes besides a lusty girl and a man." The demise of one in particular, "Oronoko's wife," prompted his "remembrance [of] those dear Innocents and their now happy Mother," a reference to the deaths of his daughters and wife. So filled with emotion, he confessed to a friend in New York that "I have been obliged to lay down my pen several times to give Vent to those Feelings only known to a tender Husband, and Parent."[49]

As he grieved over the deaths of his children and his wife, Habersham sought solace in theological insight. He wrote in 1764 after another bout of smallpox took several slaves, "in deed as to domestic afflictions of this kind, I think few Persons have experienced so many of them, and so frequently, as I have done, especially within the last 2 or 3 years." But, rather than allowing self-pity to dominate his thinking, he added, "I deserve it all. God is just in all his Dealings, and tho' things seem to be distributed in this world with an unequal Hand, yet we may rest assured, that every Thing is dealt out to us by Weight and Measure by unerring Providence, and that nothing can or does befall us, but what is right." He concluded by adding, "this consideration alone has supported me under a Variety of these kinds of afflictions."[50]

Habersham also grieved the deaths of the two men who had been closest to him over his years in Georgia: George Whitefield, his closest friend, and Francis Harris, his business partner. On the former's death in 1770, he acknowledged the evangelist's "Usefulness" in challenging the church to reclaim its New Testament and Reformation roots. In a more personal reflection, Habersham focused on the friend that he had lost:

> I have however lost in him the oldest and Dearest Friend I had upon Earth. My first acquaintance with him was 34 years ago soon after he left Oxford and on his first visit to London, before he was known as a popular preacher, and from the first hour we saw each other, to the hour of Death, our Affectionate and real Friendship never abated; indeed it was so deeply founded, that we knew not how to part, and when he first set off for this, then Infant Colony in December 1737, I left my Business, Contrary to the Sentiments of all my Friends, and embarked with him, without having any particular design in View, otherwise than to accompany him, and since my Arrival here near 33 years ago, I have not once seen my native Country, and perhaps never may.[51]

A year later, Francis Harris died. In a tender, respectful tone, Habersham wrote, "My old Friend Col Harris dyed this morning, after a very lingring and painfull Sickness, and as there was not the least prospect of his recovery, I look upon his death as a happy Release. You will join me that we have lost an honest man, and a good member of Society."[52]

When Whitefield and Harris died, Habersham was in his midfifties and beset by concerns of his own mortality. Increasingly, his letters bore testimony to physical maladies. He suffered from violent attacks of gout, a debilitating disease in its active state. Indeed, after his wife's death, Habersham's concern for his own health emerged as a major theme in his correspondence. In the midst of writing a letter to Governor Wright, he suffered a severe "Attack of the Gout," forcing him to dictate the remainder to his son John. John commented on the attack's severity, explaining that the disease was most painful in his father's left arm and hand, leaving him "weaker and more unable to do Business than ever I saw him." When he was able to resume writing, Habersham wrote in the same letter, "if I have one or two such Attacks more as I now labour under, I am afraid I shall not be able to serve you, my other Friends, my Family, and the Public much longer." Two days later, he continued the epistle, adding, "I am still painfully confined, and my Doctor and my other Friends say that I must not think of Business of any kind, that my Disorder principally lays on my Stomach and Spirits, and till they are at rest, I cannot get better." Unable to move about on his own, Habersham said that "today I was carried into a Chair and rode about 3 Miles, backward and forward," explaining that "confinement is the most dreadfull Punishment that can be inflicted on me." Always a very active man, he now faced prospects of a much slower pace, but he determined to "drag out a painfull Life in the best Manner I can."[53]

The bout continued for at least two months. He wrote one of his London correspondents on July 31, 1772, that he had been "confined for near two Months." He explained that he first had a "violent Cold, which brought on a terrible fit of the Gout, and almost rendered me incapable of any kind of Business."[54] Savannah's hot summers were especially uncomfortable for Habersham, prompting yet again talk of leaving for London or the northern colonies.

Gout continued to plague him for the rest of his life, and failing eyesight also caused him considerable distress. For someone who spent hours each day at his desk composing business correspondence, writing official documents, and making ledger entries, poor vision threatened to curb his business activities and public service. In a 1770 letter to Knox, Habersham wrote, "The most sensible Defect I feel from Age, is my Eyes failing me, for sometimes I find it difficult with Spectacles, to make a Pen at Noon day."[55]

Although touched by painful losses and beset by debilitating ailments, Habersham neither despaired nor grew bitter. Rather, he focused on the future, channeling his energy toward helping his sons. In particular, he undertook the responsibility for preparing them for successful lives in the world of practical affairs. At the time of his wife's death, his surviving children were three boys: James, eighteen, Joseph, twelve, and John, nine. James was at the College of New Jersey at Princeton but would soon return to Savannah as junior partner in a mercantile firm headed by his cousin, Joseph Clay, whom James Sr. had enticed to come to Georgia from Yorkshire in 1760. Joseph was just beginning his education at Princeton, and John lived with his father at Silk Hope and then moved with him to the new house in Savannah. There John received, according to Habersham, "no other Education, than what He got here under my own eye."[56]

As he watched his sons develop, Habersham paid close attention to each boy's character, assessing strengths and weaknesses. In a May 1768 letter to William Knox, Habersham wrote of his eldest son, "It has been remarked here, that Jemme . . . is the Gentleman, that is, is not over fond of Business." In eighteenth-century parlance, a gentleman was one who did not earn his living through his own toil. Rather, he lived off income from his assets. James Jr. apparently already struck the figure of a gentleman planter who had rather reap profits from a well-managed rice plantation than by the wheeling and dealing of the countinghouse. Of his middle son, James Sr. said, "I think Joe a sensible Lad," adding in rather unflattering terms that he saw him as a "plodding, plain man." His youngest son, John, held a

special place in the father's heart. With barely concealed pride, he declared to Knox that John had his father's aptitude and interest and, in short, was "the Merchant."[57]

Habersham sent James and Joseph to the College of New Jersey because of its deep evangelical roots. He wanted his sons to receive moral instruction and to learn the necessary skills required for planters and merchants, including how to read and write well and how to cast accounts. Although providing the former, Princeton did not deliver on the latter, and Habersham expressed his disappointment in the education his sons received there. Reflecting in 1768 on Joe's years at the college, Habersham said that he lamented sending him to Princeton because "Joe went there at 8½ years of age, and under the Idea of stuffing his Head with useless Criticisms on Phrases and Words in Latin and Greek, He was neither taught to write legibly nor with Propriety in the Language He intends to get his Bread in." In other words, Joe had not been prepared to be a merchant like his father. Merchants had to correspond with customers and suppliers in a clear, legible hand. Habersham saw little value in mastering a few phrases in dead languages. Having criticized Joe's education, he hastened to praise the boy, "I am sure, he does not want Ability and Industry. I think He will turn out a clever Fellow."[58]

At Princeton, Joseph was exposed to ideas that no doubt shaped his future political philosophy. He spent six and a half years at the College of New Jersey, returning to Georgia in late 1766 or early 1767 during his sophomore year. The college had been instituted to educate evangelical ministers. Indeed, through his association and travels with George Whitefield, James Habersham knew many of the New Light trustees, including Jonathan Dickinson, Gilbert Tennent, William Tennent, Samuel Blair, and Samuel Finley.[59] Finley was president of the college during most of Joseph's stay, and when Habersham visited his son at Princeton, he enjoyed Finley's hospitality.[60] If Habersham had hoped that young Joseph would spend his school days where "religion held the dominant place in the minds and hearts of faculty and students," he must have been chagrined to learn that with the Stamp Act the school became a "cradle of liberty." Groups of undergraduates discussed the "injustice of the Stamp Act . . . in the refectory, on the campus, and in the chambers of Nassau Hall." Moreover, beginning in the mid-1760s, commencements became occasions "for harangues on patriotism, or debates on the thesis that 'all men are free by the law of nature.'" In September 1765, the assembled graduates "were attired in cloth of Amer-

ican manufacture, an act of patriotism which brought forth warm praise from the public and the press." One writer proclaimed that "if young gentlemen of fortune and education, many of whom will probably shine in the various spheres of public life, would thus voluntarily throw aside those articles of superfluity and luxury which have almost beggared us," then they will have a profound influence on "the lower ranks of mankind."[61]

At commencement a year later, the graduates were again clad in "articles of superfluity and luxury" because of the Stamp Act's repeal. Nevertheless, the students engaged in a lively debate on the thesis that "Civil liberty is necessary to give birth to the arts and sciences." One observer noted that a student gave a "very spirited nervous harangue on Liberty."[62] How Joseph reacted to all the conversation, debates, and speeches at Princeton about liberty is unknown. His subsequent views and actions suggest that he was very much of the same mind as the upperclassmen. Like many of his classmates in the class of 1768, he became a Patriot leader in agitating and fighting for American independence. Robert Blackwell became a minister and was the only "Anglican clergyman in New Jersey to take the American side in the Revolution." Ephraim Brevard, a North Carolina physician, was one of the signers of the "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence" and during the war became a prisoner of the British with the fall of Charlestown. Pierpoint Edwards, a Connecticut lawyer and public official, sided with the Patriot cause, serving on the New Haven Committee of Correspondence and fighting under the captaincy of Benedict Arnold. William Churchill Houston, upon graduation, remained at the College of New Jersey as professor of mathematics and natural philosophy. An active Son of Liberty, Houston left his teaching post to become a deputy secretary to the Continental Congress. Adlai Osborne, North Carolina planter and public official, became a lieutenant colonel in the Patriot militia and won notoriety by securing stores for the military effort. Thomas Reese became a Presbyterian minister and used his South Carolina pulpit to preach against British oppression. Isaac Story was a Congregational minister in Boston, where he preached "on behalf of the Revolution throughout the course of the war." And Benjamin West, a lawyer, served the Patriots as a member of a "lighthorse company" and became a prisoner of war.[63] Like his classmates, Joseph would distinguish himself in the revolutionary cause.

More immediately, however, when he returned to Savannah in the late 1760s, Joseph faced the practical question of what to do with his life, that is, what profession to pursue. Here his father was very influential. Having

been a successful merchant with valuable contacts, the senior Habersham was well positioned to help young men enter the world of commerce. In 1760, he had set up his nephew, Joseph Clay, as a commission merchant in Savannah. Indeed, he had provided the bright, energetic Clay with capital and, more importantly, connections. In 1764, he assisted James Jr. in joining Clay in a partnership. And now he turned his attention to preparing his son Joe for the life of a merchant. The first step was to correct the deficiencies in Joe's education by providing practical training in business operations such as James Sr. had received as a merchant apprentice in London.

Accordingly, Habersham began canvassing his London correspondents to see who was willing to take Joe into his countinghouse and oversee his mercantile education. Habersham's assurances to his son's prospective masters and employers reflected his own work ethic and certainly consisted of values any businessman would cherish in his workers. He said that Joseph was coming to London "to acquire the Knowledge, how to get his Bread in an honest and reputable manner." Therefore, the father pledged, "I expect you or whoever may take him into compting House, will keep him closely employed, and I flatter myself, He will have sense to know, that Industry, submission and a punctual and cheerful obedience to all orders, He may receive, will not only be his indispensible Duty, but his best recommendation to the esteem of me and my friends." Moreover, if one willing to take on Joseph deemed it necessary for the lad to learn how to write better before he went into business, Habersham added, "I shall have no objection to his being 3 or 6 Months in a good Academy, where He might at the same time perfect himself in French." He closed by saying that he would "spare no expense to make him useful to you, and comfortable to himself."[64]

While Habersham had strong views about Joseph's vocational objectives and how to reach them, he recognized that ultimately the boy would decide for himself what he wished to do. In his correspondence to London friends, he made it clear that he wanted Joseph to make his own decisions. "Tho I have mentioned my Sons present Inclination to engage in commerce," he wrote, "yet if he should alter his mind, and chuse some other employment, I shall have no objection, as I don't mean to lay any unreasonable restraint on my Children." Moreover, although Habersham desired Joseph to return to Savannah after learning his trade in London, even that was to be the boy's choice. If he "can make his way in to Business in England, and should chuse to reside there, rather than in America," the elder Habersham said, "I would do all in my power to assist him."[65]

In encouraging Joe to chart his own course, Habersham was dispensing advice he himself had followed in his life. Though fiercely loyal once he committed himself to a cause, he had on many occasions gone against the grain. Most notably, when he was about Joe's age, he had turned his back on a promising career as a London merchant. To the dismay of his family, after becoming a New Dissenter, he had followed the evangelist George Whitefield. In a professional sea change, he traveled with Whitefield to Georgia to pursue a life in what amounted to an eighteenth-century Peace Corps. He arrived in Savannah as a schoolmaster and soon became superintendent of an orphanage Whitefield established in the wilderness outside the town. Then, five years later, without consulting Whitefield, Habersham decided to leave the orphanage and become a commission merchant, believing that he could benefit the charity more as a donor than as its head. Now, he wanted his sons to make their own decisions, to declare their independence.

When Joseph returned to Georgia from England, he found his father eager to support his mercantile interests by providing start-up capital, trading connections, and business acumen. James Sr. informed John Nutt, a London merchant, that he intended to set up James and Joseph in a mercantile house and give them "a clear £5000 Sterling to begin with, which I hope fully to accomplish within a year or two." Moreover, he indicated that he would provide business advice from his thirty-five years of experience as a merchant and that he would make available to his sons his very valuable business connections, that is, the suppliers and customers necessary to build a thriving operation. He assured Nutt, who would become the boys' London correspondent, that sales were already sufficient for the new firm to pay for merchandise ordered from Nutt.[66]

However, in early 1773, after being in business with his brother and father for little more than one year, Joseph left the business and became a partner with his cousin, Joseph Clay. James Habersham regarded Clay's connections, which had once been his own, as "the best in the Province." Clay approached Habersham with the idea of forming a new partnership with Joseph, indicating that he needed to start anew, being unable to manage his several partnerships, one of which included James Jr. It was not unusual for a commission merchant to do business under several entities with different partners, but now Clay wished to consolidate his business under a single operation. Habersham assured him that he and James Jr. were "perfectly accorded in this new connection" and pleased that the firm would remain within the family. The proud father noted in the early days of the new en-

terprise, "Joe attends very closely" to business and predicted that his son would "do well."[67]

During the last five years of his life, Habersham determined to provide for his sons. He confided to one London correspondent his plans to divide his estate among his three sons, adding that it would "not be inconsiderable." He explained that his "annual Income has been for some years past about £2000, and lately more," providing a substantial fund out of which, he declared, "every Farthing . . . I cheerfully give to my Children." He believed that his devotion and generosity toward them strengthened familial ties. "This makes them really love and respect me," he wrote, "and the gratefull returns I have of their Smiles, and Prayres for the Continuation of my Health, convinced that I am their best Friend and most fatithfull Steward, more than compensates for all my Trouble and Care for them."[68] That friendship between father and sons, however, would be put to a severe test over the question of American independence.

Friend

James Habersham had many friends in Georgia, and he repeatedly proved his loyalty to them. His circle of friends began with George Whitefield and the evangelical band that surrounded the itinerant preacher, extended to religious groups that shared similar views, such as the Salzburgers at Ebenezer, and eventually embraced commercial and political leaders of the colony who, like Habersham, put themselves out to place Georgia on a prosperous footing. Although he benefited immensely from his friendships in terms of access to power, information, and influence, he was not attracted to people only because they could help him. Once he became someone's friend, he tended to remain loyal even when the friendship encountered difficulties.

His friendship with George Whitefield spanned more than thirty years and continued long after Habersham left Bethesda in 1744 to open his own business. During Whitefield's sixth American trip in the 1760s, Habersham put his full weight behind his friend's efforts to establish a college at Bethesda. Noting the absence of a "seminary for academical studies as yet founded southward of Virginia," Whitefield thought that a college in Georgia would serve not only that province but the Floridas and the West Indies as well. To fund his project, he requested a grant of two thousand acres, which he proposed to convert into a productive rice plantation whose

revenues would provide capital for the college. As president of the Council, Habersham championed Whitefield's request and sponsored it in the legislature, and in no small part because of Habersham's influence, Governor Wright and the lawmakers granted the land and endorsed Whitefield's plans.[69] Though the archbishop of Canterbury eventually derailed the project because of his insistence that an Anglican be named president, Habersham remained loyal to Whitefield and to the idea of a college in Georgia. Though he would not live to see that idea germinate, his sons James and John would become trustees of the University of Georgia.

Habersham's friendship with the Salzburgers at Ebenezer was rooted in a shared faith. Drawn to the Germans by admiration for their industry as well as their piety, he extended himself for them on numerous occasions. Several times Habersham lent funds to the enterprising sect whose projects suffered from the lack of cash or credit. John Bolzius noted in his journal entry for Thursday, October 18, 1744, both the difficulty of obtaining capital and the delight in receiving an infusion from a benefactor. The Salzburgers were building a new sawmill, and Bolzius sought money from his European correspondents, but after "waiting with yearning" he had received nothing. He then got a bill of exchange drawn on the Pietist leader Court Chaplain Ziegenhagen and hoped that "the bill will be paid without delay." He recorded the obvious: "money is very scarce in the colony." He then noted that he had finally found a reliable stream of funds that would enable them to complete the mill. "There is a friend in Savannah," he wrote in reference to Habersham, "who advances us cash money, without which nothing could be constructed at the mill."[70] Barely a year after opening his mercantile business, Habersham was prospering sufficiently to assist his friends.

Habersham also assisted the Salzburgers in selling and shipping their lumber products to the West Indies. On at least one occasion, he arranged for the sale and guaranteed payment in case the purchaser failed to remit the agreed-on price on final sale. Bolzius described the transaction in his June 9, 1747, journal entry: "Our friend, Mr Habersham, writes me that a certain captain, who is sailing to the West Indies in a small craft, bought four thousand feet of the boards we have in storage in Savannah. He (Mr. Habersham) intends to countersign for the payment; otherwise I would not have agreed to the deal."[71] With good reason Bolzius referred to Habersham as the Salzburgers' "friend." First, he was looking for opportunities to sell the Germans' lumber, in this case vending some to a passing captain in a small

vessel. Second, he was willing to assume risk to make the sale, incurring personal responsibility if the captain failed to make final payment. In Habersham, the enterprising Salzburgers found their best chance for getting their surplus products to market. For his part, Habersham wanted to encourage industrious Georgians whose productivity would enable him to become as successful as an exporter as he had been as an importer.

As Habersham gained power and influence, a growing number of Georgians turned to him for counsel. In particular, he acted as attorney or legal agent for various friends while they were out of the country and could not look after their Georgia interests. Often a trip abroad occasioned his appointment, such as when Governor Wright traveled to London in 1771 on official business. Habersham never traveled to England, but his friends did, and during their departures, he oversaw their planting operations and business affairs in Georgia. At one time or another, Habersham held power of attorney for George Whitefield, William Knox, Henry Ellis, James Wright, and Henry Laurens. A letter of attorney granted Habersham authority to act in his best judgment on behalf of his clients in accordance with their instructions. In some instances his authority was very broad, enabling him to take whatever action he deemed necessary regarding his friends' land, slaves, crops, debts, and other affairs. Because of his knowledge, experience, and integrity, Habersham received the broadest powers from his friends. That meant a lot of responsibility and work for him, because in addition to looking after his own affairs and assisting his sons, he had the added burden of overseeing the extensive holdings of his friends.

Being attorney encompassed a wide range of responsibilities. He bought and sold land for his friends, purchased slaves, repaired barns and pounding mills, supervised overseers, arranged for shipping crops to London, and sent periodic reports to them. Sometimes it was too much. When in June 1771 Henry Laurens asked Habersham to once again be his attorney, Habersham explained that he and John Graham, coattorney for Laurens, agreed but added that they had "already engaged in more Business than we can do Justice to" and that "we could not personally visit your Plantations." He urged Laurens to add Lachlan McIntosh as a third attorney and to limit the powers given to the three men. Habersham suggested that Laurens could "expressly give us Power only to dispose of your Crop and Property as you may direct, turn away any Worthless men [i.e., overseers] from your Plantations, and perhaps replace others as bad." Although it was an extra burden for Habersham at a time when he was looking after his own plantations

as well as those of Governor Wright and William Knox, he took on the responsibility of overseeing Laurens's affairs because "a Friend must not want a legal representation."[72] In his mind, friends put themselves out for each other.

On occasion, Habersham's efforts went unappreciated or were criticized, leaving him frustrated and angry. One such instance involved William Knox, who, in late 1767, instructed Habersham to purchase some additional slaves for Knox's rice plantations. The following spring, when Habersham had not yet made the acquisitions, Knox expressed his exasperation in a letter. "My dear Friend," he wrote, "what is the matter that you have bought no Negroes for me this Season? The Governor has added no less than 140 to his Number in that time and you have not been able to please yourself in one for me." He explained that the delay was costing him money in a market of rising prices for rice. He concluded, "For God's sake therefore my dear friend, don't hesitate any more about buying Negroes to the extent of my Credit."[73] After more criticism, Habersham had had enough. He fired back a response as one whose honor had been offended. "If your planting Scheme has not succeeded," he wrote to Knox, "you surely cannot blame me." The problem was not Habersham's lack of attention to Knox's wishes, as Knox had complained, but Knox's failure to read and understand Habersham's correspondence. Moreover, Habersham added, he had put himself out for Knox at a time when Habersham had been "infirmed and Lame" because of gout. He told Knox that he had done all that was reasonable to oversee his rice operations except "to wade through your Rice Field, (where you had no Banks [i.e., levees]) up to my middle in mire and Water to the manifest Hazard of my Life." He concluded that he doubted if Knox had suffered any loss at all from his planting scheme, and if he had, Habersham stressed, "it is not my Fault." He closed by saying that he was "tired with these Explanations, and now take my leave offending and proving, and be assured I never will say or write one Word more on such Subjects, for if my Own Conduct will not justify me, it is full time to have done with such Correspondence."[74] In other words, gentlemen do not question the honor and integrity of each other.

Not only did Habersham view his friendship with Knox as a bond between gentlemen, but he assumed that the governing relationship between America and Britain was also a gentlemen's agreement. He recognized that on occasion gentlemen disagreed; witness the unpleasantness with Knox. But he knew that the ties were strong enough to withstand momentary

strains, and the friendship would continue. Reasonable gentlemen worked things out. Similarly, in the political arena, disputes are resolved when honorable subjects make their grievances known to a benevolent king. When Georgia's first royal governor ignored the rights of the Council, Habersham joined other Georgia leaders in protesting such usurpation. Then, when Whitehall agreed with the petitioners and recalled the governor, Habersham had confirmation of his assumption that gentlemanly codes indeed operated, enabling the mother country and the colonies to work out disputes. Shortly after Habersham moved from Silk Hope to Savannah in the early 1760s, that assumption was severely tested.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Machenry's Tavern

Loyalist

As 1765 opened, James Habersham had many reasons to bask in his success. No longer scrambling to make money, he began to think about reducing his public and private obligations. He had "long quitted an advantageous commercial business," and his rice plantations were operating profitably with little need for his direct involvement. Habersham thought that he was now in a position to slow down and enjoy life a bit more. He told several friends, "retirement and quietness must be desirable to any one of my years, especially after a hurried residence in a hot and inervating Climate."[1] His fifty years had been given to constant work, more than half of them in a semitropical environment, far different from the more temperate land of his birth. Now, financially secure, he could devote himself to his three sons: oversee their education and help them establish their own careers as merchants and planters.

However, political developments intruded into Habersham's semiretirement and embroiled him in what would become a painful controversy involving family and friends. At the time, Habersham was Governor James Wright's loyal ally, close friend, and confidant, and as he informed one correspondent, "the Governor and I are upon the most friendly and intimate Terms, and most of my vacant Hours are spent with him."[2] The friends soon found themselves governing a divided Georgia. The Stamp Act crisis of 1765–66 touched off a debate among Georgians over the new imperial measures Britain imposed on the colonies following the French and Indian War. When Parliament enacted a series of new taxes with stringent enforcement measures to ensure compliance, colonial reaction ranged from moderate to radical. Moderates viewed themselves as loyal British subjects, friends of the government, who, although opposing some aspects of the new imperial acts, believed the best recourse was to seek redress through existing channels. Radicals also saw themselves as loyal British subjects, but

they regarded laws such as the Stamp Act as infringements on their rights as British citizens and thought that the best course of action was direct resistance. All over the colonies, radicals defied the British by confiscating the stamps, seizing those rumored to be stamp collectors, boycotting British imports, and demanding immediate repeal. Moderates wrote letters to English officials urging them to reconsider the Stamp Act, while simultaneously counseling radicals to tone down their rhetoric and cease unlawful actions. Habersham was a moderate, a loyal "Friend of the Government." By remaining steadfast in service to the Crown, he found himself opposed by a swelling tide of popular opinion that placed him at odds with some of his closest friends and with his own three sons.

Criticizing Imperial Measures

After the French and Indian War, Parliament enacted measures to tighten control over colonial affairs and extract great revenue to pay for imperial administration of the North American mainland colonies. First, the Proclamation of 1763 was aimed at eliminating the main provocation of the Indians that ignited the war by temporarily prohibiting settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. A year later, the Revenue Act for America, often referred to as the Sugar Act, sought to generate an additional forty thousand pounds sterling by placing duties on a number of foreign goods much demanded by the colonists, including coffee, sugar, and wine. It also contained new regulations concerning the loading and unloading of ships in American ports and was designed to assist customs collectors in detecting smuggling. Its most controversial feature was the lowering of the duty on foreign molasses from six to three pence per gallon. By reducing the rate and strengthening the hands of collectors, George Grenville, the king's chief minister and architect of the new tax, hoped that colonists would pay the duty. At the same time, Parliament passed the Currency Act, which curbed the colonial money supply by disallowing paper notes as legal tender for paying private debts and forbidding the colonies to issue new bills. Coming in the midst of a postwar recession, the timing could not have been worse for the already cash-strapped colonists.

Habersham was part of a majority in both houses of Georgia's General Assembly that protested the Revenue Act of 1764. In a letter to William Knox, Habersham instructed him to act "in concert with any Agent or Agents of the northern provinces" to protest the act, particularly as it affected

Georgia's trade. He acknowledged that the act did not harm Georgia "in so great a degree as some of the Northern Colonys," yet he and his fellow lawmakers complained that the clause restricting lumber exports "injured us." He explained that Georgians had long exported lumber, horses, and cattle to the West Indies, a trade that had "principally been the Means, whereby most of the Inhabitants have acquired the little property they possess." Because Georgia planters and merchants owned few vessels, the majority of the exports had been carried on sailing vessels of northern registries that brought to Georgia "a few Negroes and sometimes Cash" and returned with "a load of Lumber &c for the West Indies." Although the Georgia produce often constituted a small portion of the ship's cargo, according to Habersham, this "growing commerce promised the greatest advantage to us."[3]

The Revenue Act placed that trade in jeopardy. The law required merchants, before loading their vessels with commodities for export, to give a bond "double the value of the goods, with Condition, to land the same in great Britain, or some port in America, Africa or Asia, and to return a Certificate of the same" within specified time limits. The bond remained in force a full year after completion of the voyage pending certification by four or more customs commissions that no fraud had been committed. Additional restrictions applied if the ship's cargo contained quantities of molasses or syrup. Habersham concluded that no merchant would give such a bond for most Georgia shipments because "a Cargo of Lumber [was] not very valuable," seldom yielding a commission higher than 5 to 7 percent, "a Consideration no way adequate to the risque of becoming Security in double the value of the Cargoe." The carrying merchant faced real risks under the law. If the ship's master did not take the trouble to return a certificate, "and many of them are not to be depended upon, even to do that," the bond may "miscarry, and thereby subject the Security to great trouble, vexation and Expence."[4] The real effect of the law, Habersham feared, was that transient merchant vessels would bypass Savannah, calculating that Georgia exports bore too little value to justify assuming the new risks imposed by the act.

Appealing to Knox's personal knowledge of Georgia's trade as a planter, Habersham reminded the agent "that this valuable Business, under its present Restraints, must be in a manner lost to us, and therefore we cannot too earnestly recommend your giving the utmost Attention to obtain (if possible) redress." As he concluded the letter, Habersham mentioned another concern: the proposed Stamp Act. Habersham informed Knox that a Boston committee had invited the Georgia Assembly to join Massachusetts in

instructing their agent to oppose the measure. Writing for the upper house, Habersham expressed the opinion that the Stamp Act was as fair and "equal as any, that could be generally imposed on the Colonys." Although he was willing to concede that it was equitable, he was unwilling to endorse the tax. He objected on constitutional grounds that it was a direct parliamentary tax that bypassed elected colonial assemblies. He said that he and the other councilors did not know "where the precedent may end." Moreover, he added that the Stamp Act would push taxes beyond what Georgians could pay. Taxes were already more "than the present Inhabitants can bear, and consequently they are in no Condition to be loaded with new Burthens."[5]

On July 18, 1765, Habersham, in his capacity as president of the Council, again wrote Knox with instructions regarding the Stamp Act. He acknowledged receipt of the agent's letter informing the Council of the measure's progress through Parliament. Habersham approved of Knox's "avoiding any expressions [on the issue] that might tend to call in question the Authority of parliament." But he again lectured Knox on the Council's strong opposition to the stamp tax. Assuming that the passage of the bill was a foregone conclusion, Habersham said the Council members "earnestly desire and recommend to you to watch every opportunity either jointly with the other Agents or seperately by yourself of Removing the grievance by petitioning for a repeal of the Act." However, Habersham expressed concern over the manner of opposition. "We fear it may prove of fatal Consequence to some of the Colonys," he wrote, "should they go to great lengths in denying the Authority of parliament." Rather, he continued, "we believe more may be gained by humbly and dutifuly remonstrating than by any other Method." He feared incurring the wrath of Parliament if colonial opposition to the tax was "improperly addressed."[6]

Habersham's next letter to Knox concerning the Stamp Act carried a markedly different tone. Written on October 28, 1765, it came after the bill had become law and after Knox had published a pamphlet denying the legitimacy of colonial opposition. Unlike Habersham's previous two letters, this one was a personal appeal. He started by declaring that Knox's pamphlet entitled "*the Claims of the Colonies examined* has given the greatest Umbrage, and I am afraid has not left you a single person, who will open their mouths for you in the Assembly." Moreover, he told Knox that even his strongest supporters in the upper house who had tried to put the pamphlet in its best light do "not approve of it." Specifically, Habersham challenged Knox's argument that while the colonists did not have actual representation in Parliament, they enjoyed virtual representation because each

member of Parliament represented all British citizens, not just those from his district. "It appears to me an insult on the most common understanding," he wrote, "to talk of our being *virtually* represented, and I must own, I cannot fix any precise idea to the word *virtual,* when we are speaking of the indefeasible Birth Right of a Brittish American Subject." He elaborated:

> Surely our residing in a Country Climate, where our persons & property, are subject to a thousand casualties and inconveniences (unknown to our fellow subjects in great Britain, and ultimately for their benefit) should not deprive us of being tried by a Jury, or subject us to a taxation by two Legislative bodies; one of them we indeed chearfully submit to, because chosen by ourselves to represent us, and as they know our situation and circumstances, they are consequently best qualified to imposed any necessary burdens upon us, but the others cannot . . . surely think themselves possessed of those very essential and absolutely necessary qualifications.[7]

Like colonists from Boston southward, Habersham protested against Parliament's taxation of Americans without their being actually represented in that body.

Habersham next criticized the act's enforcement provisions. Conceding that he had not yet seen a copy of the Stamp Act, he told Knox that he had heard some disturbing information about some of its features. Boston protestors had made certain that the Georgians knew about the proposed act through correspondence to the Savannah legislators. Habersham wrote, "we are told it empowers the Court of Admiralty (where a jury is not admitted) to take cognizance of causes arising thereupon."[8] To Habersham, denying trial by a jury of one's peers was an egregious violation of the rights enjoyed by all Englishmen.

Having dealt with constitutional objections, Habersham voiced concern over the tax's economic impact. "I have been told," he wrote, "that the Stamp Act, would raise Annually in South Carolina Forty Thousand pounds Sterling to be paid weekly in Silver for ever, which is perhaps more hard money than finds its way into the Province in three years on an average." Turning to Georgia, he added, "I have always thought the annual tax raised here, to support our internal Polity is full as much as the inhabitants can bear." The Stamp Act would add a ruinous burden by tripling the amount of taxes Georgians currently paid. Habersham understood why Georgians joined colonists elsewhere in protesting the measure; it must, he declared, "inevitably ruin them."[9]

Although neighboring South Carolina and eight other colonies passed

resolutions demanding repeal of the Stamp Act and asserting their rights as British citizens, Georgia maintained official silence. One historian has explained Georgia's reticence to ruffle royal feathers in terms of the colony's unique position among the American provinces. Georgia had suffered little from "hostile legislation," received much from Parliament, and depended greatly on Britain for continued protection. Parliament had appropriated "many thousands of pounds to promote its growth and prosperity." And Georgia was particularly vulnerable if England ever became its enemy because it was surrounded by Native American allies of the royal government and would, consequently, "suffer more at their hands in case of war than any of their sister colonies." Georgians feared their Creek neighbors to the west and north and had spent thousands of parliamentary funds in purchasing gifts to buy peace with the natives.[10]

A closer look at Georgia's political leadership indicates that the colony was deeply divided over how to respond to the Stamp Act crisis. The governor and Council were, with one notable exception, united in their opposition to the act and their equal detestation of radical denunciations of Parliament and parliamentary rights. They feared that extreme statements and actions, such as the riots in Boston, would make matters worse by making Parliament defensive and more determined to exercise powers of direct taxation over the colonies. These were all large, established landholders who owed their political power and much of their wealth to Whitehall. Some, such as Habersham and Francis Harris, had struggled through the mismanagement of the trustees and had welcomed royal rule. Sentiment in the Commons House of Assembly, however, was quite different. The membership there consisted primarily of younger men, some of whom were sons of councilors. They had come of age under the royal charter and did not have the trustee period as a point of comparison. Nor had they enjoyed royal largesse to the extent of their elders.

On first learning of the Stamp Act, the Assembly sought repeal. In their first letter to Knox, the assemblymen echoed the Council's sentiments, instructing the agent to "use his utmost Endeavours for the obtaining of a Repeal" and to act in concert with agents from the northern colonies.[11] Six months later, however, the Commons House had moved beyond the Council in its protest and sought to join cause with the Massachusetts Assembly. Speaker Alexander Wylly informed the House on October 29, 1765, that he had received a letter from Samuel White, Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The letter informed Wylly that the Massachusetts Assembly had voted unanimously to join a meeting at New

York City of "Committees from the Houses of Representatives of the several British Colonies." The purpose was "to consult together on the present Circumstances of the Colonies and the Difficulties to which they are and must be reduced by the Operation of Acts of Parliament for laying Duties and Taxes on the Colonies and to consider of an humble Representation to his Majesty and the Parliament." With the Georgia House in recess, Wylly hastily called for a meeting of representatives "without the least Delay" to consider a response to White's letter. Sixteen of the twenty-five members assembled, but Governor Wright, who opposed Georgia's sending a delegation to the Stamp Act Congress, refused to call the Assembly into session to discuss the matter. Nevertheless, Wylly expressed the sense of the Assembly in a letter to White that was reprinted in the *Georgia Gazette.* He informed White that Georgia would not send a delegation because the governor "did not think it expedient" to call the legislature together to discuss the issue, but he assured the Massachusetts Speaker "that no Representatives of any Province on this Continent can more sincerely concur in the Measures proposed than do the Representatives of this Province." He added, "neither can any People as Individuals more warmly espouse the Common Cause of the Colonies than the People of this Province."[12] That bold declaration must have had a hollow ring to White and the Massachusetts assemblymen, because they had also met with opposition from a royal governor, but unlike Wylly and his associates, they had defied their governor. To Georgians, however, the Assembly's stance was bold indeed, exposing the rift between the Assembly and the governor and Council.

A month later, the gap widened as the Assembly moved closer to the "radical" stance of the northern colonies. On Monday, November 25, Wylly received a copy of the proceedings of the Stamp Act Congress along with petitions from several colonies including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. Also included in the packet were letters endorsing strong colonial action from James Otis of Massachusetts and Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina. The Georgia Commons House dissolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the correspondence and, on Saturday, December 14, resolved to endorse the actions taken by the Stamp Act Congress. They sent their new agent, that is, the person *they* considered to be the new agent, Charles Garth, "the Petitions and Memorial that were agreed on by the several Commissioners at the Congress of New York which have been agreed to by this House."[13] The young assemblymen were moving ever farther away from the governor and Council.

Debate over the Stamp Act in Georgia was not confined to the halls of government. Inspired by Bostonians and other northerners who resisted royal authority, some Georgians engaged in their own brand of politics-out-of-doors. And before the protest had run its course, James Habersham would become a target of popular outrage.

The November 7 issue of the *Georgia Gazette* gave two indications that the Stamp Act was about to be implemented in Savannah and introduced to its readers a group that called itself the "Sons of Liberty." First, there was a report that "one Mr. Angus . . . is appointed Stamp-master for this province." A second rumor had the "stampt paper" on its way from Charlestown aboard the *Speedwell.* Georgia's Sons of Liberty met at Machenry's Tavern "in order to consult upon the properest measures to be taken at this very alarming and critical juncture." In language both colorful and threatening, the group "unanimously agreed . . . that the Stamp-master appointed for this province, immediately on his arrival, be waited upon, and, as that gentleman is a stranger to this place, and consequently unacquainted with the sentiments of the people, be desired to resign an office so universally disagreeable to his Majesty's American subjects." The Sons of Liberty warned that any attempt to put the Stamp Act into effect would be attended with very "bad consequences."[14]

A week later, the mood in Savannah turned ugly. Uncertain of the stamp master's identity, some protestors sent threatening letters to five suspects, including James Habersham. In reprints that appeared in the *Gazette,* each of the letters began with the authors' claiming "great Reason to be Leave you are the person appointed the Stamp master," followed by two threats. First, "if you don't Emediately Convince the inhabitants by yr. Advertising at the Exchange, ye Market and the pump you will be suspected to be the person." In other words, the burden was on the suspect to prove that he was not the stamp master. The second threat warned the suspect, "if you know if paper is here or who is the appointed person you must disclose per above," adding that refusal to comply would result in most unpleasant consequences. Governor Wright took the threats seriously by offering a pardon and reward of fifty pounds to anyone disclosing the name of the authors, except, of course, the authors. Moreover, he instructed all "judges, magistrates, constables, and other peace officers . . . strictly to observe and pay due obedience to this my proclamation" and to do all humanly possible for "preventing and suppressing any riot or tumultuous assembly."[15]

At the close of Georgia's 1765 legislative session, Governor Wright

warned radicals of their intemperate stance concerning the Stamp Act. "Before we part," he said in his concluding remarks, "let me in the strongest Manner recommend it to you to endeavour to rectify and remove the gross Errors and ill-grounded Prejudices which some misguided People have been lately led into by Men who can neither be Friend to their King their Country or to Society." He no doubt feared that the Sons of Liberty, which he called the Sons of Licentiousness, had swayed many of the lawmakers, pushing them into a more radical stance. He closed with a call for loyalty to England by seeking a constitutional remedy by petitioning the Crown for redress of grievances. "Let us confide in the Justice of the Mother Country for Relief if we are aggrieved," he lectured the Assembly, "which will in Reality prove us to be loyal good and wise Subjects."[16] He was expressing in public what Habersham had said in private: that disloyal behavior would result in raising Parliament's ire while loyal conduct would produce filial relief.

When Wright next addressed the Assembly, Parliament had repealed the Stamp Act. As he laid the repeal before the legislators, he expressed confidence that they would be filled with "filial Gratitude" and would make a "dutiful and proper Return and shew a chearful Obedience to the Laws and Legislative Authority of Great Britain for the very extraordinary Lenity Tenderness and Indulgence shewn and extended by the Mother Country." He then placed before the joint session a copy of an "Act for the better securing the dependency of his Majesty's Dominions upon the Crown and Parliament in Great Britain." Habersham delivered the upper house's response, which Alexander Wylly echoed for the lower house. Habersham expressed the Council's "Thanks for the Repeal of the . . . Stamp Act" and for Parliament's providing "so speedy and necessary Relief." He pledged that it was "our true Interest to remain connected with and dependant on the Imperial Crown and Parliament of Great Britain upon the solid Basis of the British Government."[17] To Habersham, the repeal meant that the British constitution worked. Parliament had listened to the colonists' grievances and granted relief.

While Governor Wright and President Habersham credited the lenity and tenderness of Parliament for repealing the Stamp Act, other Georgians read the event differently. On July 2, the Assembly "voted their thanks to Charles Garth, Esq., for his important services in soliciting the repeal of the Stamp-Act."[18] That resolution reflected a split between the Assembly and the Council over the selection of an agent. After William Knox had

published his attack on the colonists' position, Habersham and his colleagues in the upper house had censured him in private but wished to continue his employment as agent. Wylly and the lower house voted to replace him. They then named Charles Garth as his successor, a move that neither Wright nor the Council approved. Thus, Garth became an important symbol of the Assembly's defiance of royal authority. Now, after the repeal, the lower house could not resist publicly acknowledging Garth's role. James Johnston, publisher of the *Georgia Gazette,* suggested that the people themselves deserved the credit for the repeal. As Georgians awaited the vessel from Charlestown that was expected to bring news of the rescission, Johnston expressed his hope of having "the pleasure of congratulating the public on the most important news of the bill for repealing the Stamp Act."[19] He seemed to be saying that public protest and agitation, not official actions, produced the desired result.

Lost in the celebration was any comment on the measure accompanying repeal, the Declaratory Act. Neither Habersham nor Wylly acknowledged the measure that guaranteed the continuation of the constitutional debate between Parliament and colonial assemblies. Published on the front page of the June 25, 1766, edition of the *Georgia Gazette,* the act declared "that the said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon, the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain." Moreover, it asserted that the "king in Parliament" possessed "full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and peoples of America . . . in all Cases whatsoever."

What was important to Habersham was that his faith in royal government had once again been affirmed. Just as Whitehall had recalled a bad governor ten years earlier, Parliament had repealed a bad piece of legislation. In both cases, the mother country had listened to colonists' petitions. Habersham was reassured that the system worked.

Confronting Radicals

The debate over the Stamp Act made Habersham fear for his life and his country. In a letter to George Whitefield in early January 1766, he wrote, "we are in so much Confusion here about the Stamp Act that every Friend of Government and good Order [i.e., moderate] . . . gives his whole attention to prevent, if possible, the most fatal Consequences." Writing with

considerable feeling, he explained his position: "My very Flesh trembles while I am writing to you, at, I must say, the Madness of the People here, we mean to be as good patriots, as they have shewn themselves." Clearly he was upset that he had been branded as unpatriotic when, in his mind, no one had done more in protesting the Stamp Act and seeking its repeal. Moreover, he thought the tactics of the Sons of Liberty would backfire: "Surely the violent measures that have been persued must rather retard than forward a repeal of the Act." In defending his behavior, Habersham articulated the principle underlying his public service: "to obey all orders and Acts of government, for no longer, than I can do so, no longer will I act in a Public Character, persuaded that the Crown have as good a right to faithfull servants, as you and I have to those we pay wages to." Obviously, some persons in Savannah did not think highly of Habersham's position. He told Whitefield that "on this account I have had an incendiary letter written to me, have been threatened to be mobbed at Night, and have my House pulled down." Even as he wrote, he was frightened: "while I am writing this, a friend has whispered to me to be in some Place out of Town 2 or 3 days hence, least I should meet with some severe Insult which advice I shall follow, as we are informed two or three Hundred People are gathering together in the Country, and intend to encamp near the Town."[20]

Habersham continued pouring out his fears over strife-torn Georgia. He speculated that the radicals encircling Savannah were trying "to intimidate the Governor and public officers to comply with their Demands." Though he did not know the specifics of the demands, he guessed that they included putting "a totall stop to issuing Stamp Papers." He and other merchants and planters had prevailed on the Sons of Liberty to allow stamps to be issued for the purpose of clearing vessels that were ready to sail. Taking a practical view of affairs, Habersham thought it important to keep commerce flowing and government open even if it meant tempering one's stand on principle. In other words, he seemed to say, "Let's consider first what is necessary to promote private and public business and then we can address the grievances of the Stamp Act." He noted that sixty-six vessels were currently bottled up in the harbor because the radicals would not allow stamped clearances to be issued. He charged the Sons of Liberty with inciting mob behavior, calling it dreadful "to find one's Person and Property at the Disposal of a giddy multitude." He believed that Georgians would no longer be free if radicals continued to ignore the rule of law.[21]

Two days later, Habersham unburdened himself in a letter to Knox.

Lamenting the "Dominion of a Mob" over one's person and property, he asked, "O Liberty wither art tho' fled?" He assured the former agent that the governor had not submitted "an Inch to the phrenzy of an unthinking Multitude" and was "laboring Night and day to prevent the worst Consequences." Yet he feared the mob, informing Knox that he had left his home for a few days and moved in with Governor Wright until the protestors decamped. In exasperation he exclaimed, "Good God! did I ever expect to see this day." Yet, he remained the optimist, expressing his belief that "all will end well with us, perhaps better, than in any of the Northern Colonys, on this Side Nova Scotia." He based his sanguinity on the steadfast governor and Council that "have not flinched on the occasion."[22]

In a letter to Samuel Lloyd, a London merchant and former trustee of Georgia, Habersham explained the nature of the rift caused by the Stamp Act in the colony. He said that the government was divided, with the Crown-appointed Council remaining loyal to England and the popularly elected Assembly constituting the opposition. Each house now spoke through its own agent.[23] The division among lawmakers, Habersham reported, ran largely along generational lines, with the older members of the upper house taking the Loyalist position and the younger legislators of the lower house the Patriotic.

By 1767, Habersham viewed American insubordination as a greater danger to the colonists' freedom than imperial measures. In a letter to Lloyd he stated, "I am persuaded our happiness depends on our subordination to the Mother Country, and no longer . . . than that subsists no longer shall we be a free & flourishing People." Three years later, Habersham was even more convinced that mob rule undermined liberty more than new duties and taxes, though he opposed such on economic and political grounds. After the Boston Massacre, he wrote some newspaper articles setting forth his views. He explained that he had taken up his pen against "some of the greatest Bawlers for Liberty, [who] had taken an unjust and partial advantage of their Neighbors, who they were now oppressing with a heavy hand to serve their own selfish purposes." He argued that those so-called Sons of Liberty had taken "the powers of Government out of it's proper and legal channell, and invested it in a Mob—which must eventually end in a total subversion of all Law and Government and of Course expose Mens persons and properties to Violence and Rapine." He noted that "it is easy to inflame the populace," but that once people are inflamed, it is "impossible to keep them within the bounds of reason and Equity." He warned that some good, principled people get drawn into what at first sounds like a fight for liberty. "It is greatly to be

lamented," he concluded, "that some of the men are drawn in, (doubtless from a principle of promoting Liberty) to be the first encouragers of the facetious [factious?] Spirits, not sufficiently considering what may be the consequence, which if it should turn out of an evil nature, they perhaps never can forgive themselves for the part they acted to bring it about."[24] Once started, mob rule overruns its leaders and their lofty intentions.

A Family Divided

The controversy over Britain's new imperial policies after the French and Indian War was a family dispute. Each side employed familial language to characterize the other. Speaking on behalf of the Stamp Act in Parliament, Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend asked if "*Those children of our planting . . . nourished by our indulgence,* . . . [will] grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy load of national expence which we be under?" Implicit in the question was Townshend's view that loyal, grateful children who have flourished under a benevolent parent will surely contribute to the parent's well-being in time of need. Members sympathetic to America also found the family to be a fitting metaphor to discuss British treatment of the colonists. Isaac Barre responded to Townshend by mockingly asking, "*Children planted by your care?* No!," he exclaimed, "your repression planted them in America."[25]

Many Georgians reading those words in the August 1, 1765, issue of the *Georgia Gazette* would come to realize over the next ten years that the American Revolution could become a real as well as a rhetorical family dispute. In the words of James Habersham, president of the Council and secretary of Georgia, the growing tension between Britain and the American colonies could pit "Father against Son, and Son against Father." Perhaps the best-known case of internecine hostility fostered by the Revolution involved Georgia's agent, Benjamin Franklin, appointed after the passage of the Stamp Act. Franklin worked tirelessly for the Patriot cause, first in London making the case against parliamentary taxation and, when those efforts failed, then in Paris seeking financial support and military alliance to fight the British. However, his son William, royal governor of New Jersey, remained loyal to the Crown. In the words of one English commentator after the war, William "'remained undaunted before the storm,' refusing to desert his British loyalty in the face of his father's claim to his personal loyalty."[26] In that instance, political ties transcended familial bonds.

Like Benjamin Franklin, Georgia fathers saw their sons make choices

that placed them in political opposition to their parents. In a reversal of the Franklin loyalties, however, most of the Georgia fathers remained loyal to England while their sons became Patriots. Noble Jones, a longtime member of the Council, saw his son Noble Wimberley Jones become an ardent Son of Liberty whose successive elections as Speaker of the House led Governor James Wright and Acting Governor James Habersham to dissolve the representative Assembly rather than sanction the election of a rebel. Francis Harris, member of the Council and Habersham's former business partner, also saw his son Francis defy royal government as a Son of Liberty. And Habersham witnessed his sons Joseph and James as well as his nephew, Joseph Clay, pledge themselves to oppose the very parliamentary measures that Habersham swore to support.

These Georgian sons waged wars of independence at two levels. They fought for the right of colonial self-government, but they also asserted their own autonomy as the rising generation of leaders. Embarrassed that their fathers' leadership had made Georgia the only colony not represented at the First Continental Congress in 1774 and the last to sign the Continental Association the following year, and then in a modified version, the sons formed a radical corps that led the province into the Revolution.

The Habershams' experience was much like that of other families with divided loyalties: a father filled with anguish and dread of impending doom and sons torn between supporting an aged, infirm parent while impatient with his old-fashioned and wrongheaded ideas. But what makes the Habersham story different from many interfamilial conflicts is that, in opposition, the sons were obeying their father. The elder Habersham had consistently encouraged his sons to become independent thinkers, to sort out controversial issues, including those of a political and religious nature, and decide for themselves. Early in the dispute with England, he even went as far as withholding his own political views from them for fear his notions would influence his sons' reaching independent positions. James Jr., Joseph, and John Habersham did think for themselves, and all three reached conclusions about the question of independence that were diametrically opposed to their father's views. Despite political differences, however, father and sons maintained their loyalty, affection, and love for each other.

While refraining from revealing to Joe his own political views, Habersham did state some principles that guided him. First, he expressed his reverence for the rule of law. He warned against those who, under the aegis of liberty, take advantage of their neighbors "to serve their own selfish purposes." These designing persons take the "powers of Government out of its

proper and legal channell, and invest it in a Mob," thus subverting all "Law and Government" and exposing lives and property to "Violence and Rapine." Second, Habersham opined that reason and equity, not inflammatory rhetoric, ought to guide one's political choices. He reminded Joe that "our History" is filled with examples of "flagrant Instances" of what happens when inflamed passion unseats calm reason. He closed with his hope that the "present Generation" would not make the same mistake and warned that once passion is unloosed in public affairs, unintended consequences often lead to regret.[27]

In little more than a year, James Habersham Jr. and his cousin Joseph Clay, with considerable help from the senior Habersham, had launched a successful mercantile business. They emerged as political leaders as well, serving the Whig cause and thus placing them in direct opposition to the elder Habersham. Both Joseph Clay and Joseph Habersham became leaders in the Sons of Liberty and subsequently made their revolutionary sentiments known in the most demonstrative and public ways. As he watched his son and nephew fanning popular sentiment at the Liberty Pole near Machenry's Tavern, James Habersham must have reflected on his parental philosophy and influence. In raising his sons, he had subscribed to a Lockean view of child rearing and education: impress on innocent minds the right principles and positive examples, and children will develop aright. In a letter to a friend and Charlestown merchant, Henry Laurens, Habersham offered assurance that Laurens's sound moral influence on his young sons would produce upright men. "When your Boys come on the Stage of Life," he wrote, "I doubt not but the seed you have sown in their unwary Hearts, will shoot out ultimately to your comfort." Habersham warned that such a process is not without its heartaches. "You must not be discouraged," he warned, "if you meet with some rubs in the way but patiently go on, and expect the best."[28] Habersham now looked across a bitter political divide at what his parental encouragement had produced.

The first occasion when father and son openly opposed each other was in spring 1771 when Governor Wright rejected the Assembly choice of Noble Wimberley Jones as Speaker because Jones was a leading Son of Liberty. As president of the Council and close friend of the governor, Habersham stood squarely with Wright. But James Jr., newly elected representative from Frederica, joined in unanimously defying Wright by reelecting Jones. Although no record survives giving James Sr.'s reflections on his son's vote, we can infer from earlier sentiments that the father would have been more disappointed in his son's acquiescing in popular opinion than in the vote itself.

He had earlier expressed his concern that "Jemme" was too easily swayed by popular opinion. He told one correspondent after the Stamp Act controversy that his oldest son was "greatly Caressed being perfectly good natured," which accounted for his great popularity. By that statement he meant that Jemme was a popular young man. Habersham hoped that his son's easy-going disposition would not "be the Rock He will split upon." He wrote, "I cannot help having My Fears, but as he does not want a tolerable share of good sense, I am in hopes he will make profitable reflections from what he sees and hears among a Volatile, but kind people as we really in general are in this End of the Earth." The reference to a "Volatile, but kind people" reflected Habersham's recent experience with angry Georgians who not only opposed the Stamp Act, as he did, but threatened him as a councilor for not taking a more radical stance such as that assumed by Boston radicals. He may have been afraid that popular opinion had already influenced Jemme's political perspective.[29] Now, as a young legislator casting one of his first votes, James Jr. went along with what to his father must have seemed a tide of popular opinion.

The next year James Habersham Jr. was at the center of the growing tension between the governor and the Assembly. After dissolving the legislature, Governor Wright sailed for London, bestowing on Habersham the exalted title "President and Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's Province of Georgia, Chancellor, Vice-Admiral, and Ordinary of the same for the time being." Wright referred to Habersham as "a gentleman of property, no Liberty Boy, but a firm friend to Government and a very worthy, honest man."[30] When he convened a new legislative session, Habersham faced a defiant Assembly that promptly proceeded to elect Noble Jones as Speaker of the House and, when Habersham vetoed their choice, reelected him. Each party, the Assembly and the acting governor, claimed the selection of the Speaker as its prerogative. When Jones stepped aside, citing the need to attend to business demands, the Assembly chose Archibald Bulloch, another leading Son of Liberty. Habersham had had enough and dissolved the Assembly. In explaining his decision, he told the assemblymen: "I have no Choice left but to Proceed to an immediate dissolution."[31] In his mind, the issue was clear: sovereignty was undivided, resting solely with the king in Parliament. The Assembly was equally adamant that it had merely defended its constitutional rights. In response to Habersham, the legislators stood firm: "our third choice of Noble Wimberly Jones, Esq., as our Speaker, was not in the least meant as disrespectful to his Majesty or you

his Representative, nor thereby did we mean to infringe on the just Prerogative of the Crown." They claimed that their action was not "contrary to the Strict Mode of Parliamentary Proceedings."[32]

Habersham explained his action in a letter to secretary of state Lord Hillsborough: "After a fruitless Attempt on my part to make the Commons House sensible of their Duty to the King, in acknowledging His Majesty's just, undoubted and indisputable Right to negative a Speaker and their Folly in attempting to violate our happy Constitution, I failed, and was obliged to dissolve them."[33] Hillsborough's reply of December 4 expressed to Habersham "His Majesty's approbation of your conduct." The secretary of state found the Assembly's actions "unwarrantable and unconstitutional," and that Habersham was right in dissolving the body.[34] However, on reviewing the Assembly's minutes, Hillsborough was less approving of Habersham's actions. On August 7, 1772, the secretary wrote the acting governor, "It does not appear, however, from the minutes of their proceedings which you have transmitted that they did in direct terms so draw into question His Majesty's right to put a negative upon their choice of a Speaker as to have made it necessary in consequence of my instructions to you to have come to that extremity." In other words, he thought that Habersham might have construed the Assembly's behavior too narrowly and acted too precipitously.[35] Perhaps a more accomplished politician could have handled the matter more adroitly, but by his own admission, Habersham was not at home in the world of politics. He was eager to give up power, urging Wright to "come over, and take the Reins from me." Later, he summed up his views succinctly: "I Hate what is generally understood by Politicks."[36]

Pressured by legislative needs in Georgia and political pressure from Whitehall, Habersham reconvened the Assembly in December 1772. In his opening address, he could not resist the temptation to lecture the legislators on their duties. Delivering what amounted to a warning, he stated, "Gentlemen as you are called together for no other purpose but to deliberate on the best Methods of promoting the Publick Good, I hope you will not Suffer your Attention to be drawn off from that object."[37] He wanted them to keep their focus on local concerns, not on radical notions emanating from Boston and other treasonous seedbeds.

Habersham's confrontation with the Assembly both saddened and mystified him. He could not understand why his sons' generation would turn against the Crown that had benefited their families. When he dissolved the legislature, he reflected, "I cannot help considering Mr. Jones's

Conduct for some time past in opposing Public Business, as very ungratefull and unworthy of a good Man, as his Family has reaped more Advantages from Government, than any I know in this Province."[38] Perhaps he was also thinking of his own sons, particularly Joseph.

Joseph had returned to Savannah from London in November 1771 just months after Wright had dissolved the Assembly. While he was not directly involved, on at least one occasion he was present when the issue was debated. Jonathan Bryan, James Habersham's longtime friend and fellow councilor, had been the only member of the Council to oppose Wright's exercise of his royal prerogative in rejecting Jones as Speaker. That act had chilled the two men's friendship. Thus Habersham invited Bryan over to his residence for dinner and to discuss the next legislative session, the one that would see Habersham as acting governor. Before this evening, the two men had for some time "carefully avoid[ed] entering into Politics" when they met. But now, at table with Habersham and his sons, Joe and John, Bryan "dropt a Hint" that if Habersham called an Assembly he "should meet with no Trouble."[39] Habersham's account of that evening does not reveal Joe's thoughts or observations regarding the matters discussed. The young man must have questioned the royal governor's right to dissolve the Assembly because he disapproved of its choice of Speaker. As a twenty-year-old young man whose father had encouraged him to think for himself on important issues, he must have at least questioned the legitimacy of the royalist position in the dispute.

Joseph made his position abundantly clear three years later on an occasion that saw the Habersham family clearly divided over the growing rift between Britain and the colonies. On July 27, 1774, the Sons of Liberty met at Tondee's Tavern to protest the Coercive Acts. The tavern became the rallying place for Georgia radicals, and its proprietor, Peter Tondee, like Habersham's sons, illustrated the youthful composition of the Patriots. Indeed, Tondee had been one of the first orphans that Habersham took in at Bethesda. The meeting concluded with the naming of a committee to define "the position of the people of the province on the questions then engaging the earnest attention of the provinces further north." Among those named were Joseph Habersham and Joseph Clay. Two weeks later, the committee published a set of resolutions denouncing the acts against Boston and the people of Massachusetts. The committee said the British blockade of Boston harbor was "contrary to our idea of the British Constitution" and deprived "good and lawful men of their property without judg-

ment of their peers." The abolition of the Massachusetts charter was termed "subversive of American rights." A colonial charter can only be dissolved "by a voluntary surrender of the people, representatively declared." Moreover, Parliament possessed no "right to tax his Majesty's American subjects; for it is evident beyond contradiction, the Constitution admits of no taxation without representation." The document concluded by pledging that the Georgia Sons of Liberty would "concur with our sister colonies in every constitutional measure to obtain redress of American grievances."[40]

In swift reaction to those resolutions, another group of Georgians met to register their dissent. Included in the list of seventy-nine citizens protesting the August 10 resolutions were the names of James Habersham Sr. and James Habersham Jr. Father and son now, in fact, stood in public opposition to the more radical Joseph, and thus at least for the moment, brother opposed brother. Having attacked his father's position in 1771, James Jr. now supported it, reflecting the indecision James Sr. had worried about. The dissenters were most disturbed by the Sons of Liberty's representing their resolutions as representative of sentiment throughout Georgia. In reality, the dissenters claimed, the August 10 meeting was "held by a few persons in a tavern, with the doors shut," and cannot, "with any appearance of truth and decency, be called a general meeting of the inhabitants of Georgia." Hundreds more dissenters signed petitions protesting the Sons of Liberty resolutions. One statement urged Georgians to "be not led away by the voices and opinions of men's over-heated ideas." Rather, people should "consider cooly and sensibly of the terrible consequences which may attend adopting resolutions and measures *expressly contrary to law,* and hostile to the Mother Country." Another protest spoke to the Sons of Liberty's claims that they were guardians of freedom: "You may be advocates for liberty: but so am I, but in a constitutional and legal way." That statement warned that "where there *is no law there can be no liberty.*"[41] Thus the lines were drawn between those proposing a more radical course of action and those wishing for a more moderate response. And Habershams stood on both sides of the question.

In January 1775, the divide between father and son widened. The Provincial Congress established itself as the true representative body of the people of Georgia, placing that group in opposition to royal government. Joseph Habersham sat in the former group, his father in the latter. The forty-five delegates to the Provincial Congress selected delegates to the Continental Congress, drew up articles of an association, and named officers for a mili-

tia. Heading the list of four delegates to the Continental Congress was Noble Wimberley Jones, the man that James Habersham as acting governor had repeatedly found unfit as Speaker of the House. The association stated its purpose: "to obtain redress of *American grievances,* we do therefore, for ourselves and our constituents, firmly agree and associate under the sacred ties of virtue, honour, and love of our country." The revolutionaries then pledged to prohibit importation and exportation, encourage manufacturing, and discourage conspicuous consumption. To enforce the articles, a committee in every parish and town would "observe the conduct of all persons touching the Association." Signers of the document included James Habersham's son Joseph, his nephew Joseph Clay, and his partner's son, Francis H. Harris.[42] As one who opposed the association, James Sr.—merchant, planter, and president of the Council—was a target of the revolutionaries.

Georgia now had two governments. The governor and his Council and the House of Assembly continued to meet as the duly authorized royal government. But a new Whig government operated as well, with a second Provincial Congress being constituted in July 1775 and a Committee or Council of Safety acting as its executive branch when the Congress was not in session. Joseph Habersham sat on the Council of Safety even as his father presided over the royal Council. It was the Council of Safety that assumed responsibility for military affairs, including making appointments to command the revolutionary militia. In December, the Council commissioned Joseph as major, placing him third in command behind Colonel Samuel Elbert and Lt. Colonel Stephen Drayton.[43] Early the following year, the Provincial Congress voted to provide "for the organization of a regiment of troops on the continental basis to aid in the common defense" and, accordingly, named Joseph major in the Continental Army.[44]

Despite political tensions and differences within the Habersham family, sons and father maintained amicable relations. While they stood on opposite sides of the speakership controversy in 1771, James Sr. and James Jr. literally worked together in the mercantile firm of James Habersham Junior & Company. In arranging a correspondence with a London merchant for his son, Habersham pledged to "support my Son with all my Interest and Estate." Moreover, he determined to use all his resources and connections to make the business a thriving concern for both James and Joseph. He explained to one correspondent that his motivation was not personal profit but "to connect my Son Joe with his Brother," believing that he could best help his sons if they operated within the "Family."[45] At the same time, John

acted as his father's personal secretary, faithfully writing and copying letters that expressed political opinions that he would later oppose.[46]

By spring of 1775, Habersham expressed his fear that the colonists were on the brink of open armed rebellion against Britain and civil war among themselves. He told John Clark, a London merchant, that "the People on this Continent are generally almost in a State of Madness, and Desperation, and should conciliating Measures take Place on your Side, I know not what may be the Consequences." He declared that "I would not chuse to live here longer, than we are in a State of proper Subordination to, and under the protection of Great Britain." Habersham added, though, that he hoped that Parliament would agree to a new "permanent Line of Government" between "the Mother and her Children," hinting at a commonwealth where sovereignty would be divided. He repeated his fear that short of some sort of accommodation on "Constitutional Grounds," then "Horror and Grief" would be visited on families.[47]

Within a month, and just before he departed for New Jersey for the summer, Habersham's fears were realized. Joseph served on a special committee within the Council of Safety charged with the responsibility of securing arms and ammunition for the colony's Patriots. In pursuit of that goal, around midnight on May 11 he and others broke into the king's magazine in Savannah and carried off all the ammunition. Among Joseph's accomplices was his former business partner and cousin, Joseph Clay. Two months later, Habersham and a band of Liberty Boys captured a British powder ship and took off an estimated fourteen thousand pounds of powder for the Patriot cause.[48] Although no record survives indicating his father's response to those specific revolutionary activities, one can infer from comments on other occasions what he must have thought. When he learned of the fighting at Lexington and Concord, he concluded that the battles would put an "End to all Reconciliation," and in light of Joseph's militancy, he must have wondered if that sentiment did not also apply to his family.[49]

By summer of 1775, James Sr. had little energy left to expend on politics. Suffering severely from gout, he wished to escape the heat and humidity that seemed to make his condition worse. Accompanied by his sons James and John, he departed Georgia for what would turn out to be the last time. He left with a heavy heart. At the end of May he expressed his profound anguish that the battles at Lexington and Concord meant the final separation of Britain and the colonies. "I am greatly distressed about the bloody News we hear from the Northward," he wrote a friend in Charlestown,

fearing that "from this Event may be dated the almost ruin of Great Britain and this very flourishing Continent."[50] He also must have wondered if his family was not hopelessly rent in sentiments over the political struggle. While Joseph was immersed in the revolutionary government, at least for the moment James and John placed their father's well-being ahead of politics and traveled with him. For some time, John, now twenty-one years old, had acted as his father's secretary and nurse. James explained that "my Son John must be with me, wherever I go" and, therefore, would go to New Jersey with him. And James was going as much for his own health as to be with his father. On the eve of the journey, James Sr. said that "my eldest James appears to be in a declining State of Health."[51] But it was James Sr. whose health was declining. The milder New Jersey climate could not arrest the elder Habersham's rapidly failing health, and on August 28 he died at New Brunswick. On their father's death, James Jr. and John returned to Georgia, where, no longer responsible for their father's health, both joined their brother in declaring for the Whig government.

The roles that the Habersham boys played in the war reflected their personalities. Joseph, the most volatile, emerged early as a leading revolutionary who figured in some of the most dramatic moments in Georgia's revolutionary history. By popular accounts, he played a major part in arresting Governor Wright in January 1776 on behalf of the Council of Safety. Entering the residence where his father had often enjoyed the warmest hospitality as the governor's close friend and adviser, the twenty-five-year-old major supposedly walked alone into the governor's chamber and placed him under arrest.[52] That same kind of daring and zeal for the patriotic cause made him known throughout the American colonies.

Even in war, John played the role of peacemaker. With a temperament much like his father's, he favored reconciliation if possible, though he proved his willingness and ability to fight by becoming a major in the Georgia Continental Battalion. In 1781, General Anthony Wayne's forces recaptured Georgia from the British. Knowing that Savannah was home to many Loyalists, Wayne enlisted John's services in working out an agreement that would enable some Loyalists to join the Patriots and permit others to bring their affairs to an orderly conclusion and leave the colony. Wayne knew that Habersham enjoyed good prewar relations with many of the Loyalist merchants and made him the liaison with the Loyalists. As a result, some indeed joined ranks with the Patriots while others agreed to stay in Savannah under protection of the Americans. Some accepted the terms of ending

their businesses within twelve months and then returning to England.[53] Many of those loyal Savannahans had been James Habersham's friends.

While supporting the Revolution, James Jr. was much more moderate in word and deed than his brothers and, like the state as a whole, expressed ambivalence toward independence. Like his father, he had at first opposed the more radical actions of the Sons of Liberty, which included his brother Joseph and his cousin and former business partner, Joseph Clay. But after his father's death, he became warmer in support of independence, though unlike his brothers, he did not take up arms in active military service. During the Revolution, James served in the Georgia Assembly, and as a merchant he outfitted privateer vessels to bring supplies to Georgia. However, he spent much of the war years outside the state. In 1778 when the British overran the state, he took his family, including scores of slaves he recently inherited from his father, to South Carolina. Then, when that province fell in 1780, James removed with his family to Virginia. Though his war record could not match that of Joseph or John, he enjoyed the respect and trust of fellow Georgians after the war. He was elected Speaker of the House and served with distinction.[54]

Despite vigorously pursuing opposite goals in the Revolutionary struggle, the Habersham family, however strained by politics, maintained affectionate bonds. In fall of 1775, the Whig sons gathered to pay their final respects to their Tory father. His obituary called him a man of "great probity, integrity and honour," and few, including those who opposed his political views, would have disagreed. He was also remembered as "an affectionate and tender parent," and his sons could well attest to the validity of that characterization.[55] He had encouraged them to decide for themselves what political course they would take. Habersham had been correct in fearing that unless some sort of new accommodation could be reached between England and the colonies, the result would be "Father against Son, and Son against Father." The Habersham family was not unique in experiencing internecine strife. What made their experience different, however, was that political opposition did not sever the bonds of family ties.

James Habersham's love for his sons reached beyond the grave. Throughout the American Revolution, political opposition had been expressed in the marketplace. The Patriots had protested British acts by refusing to import, export, and consume British goods. Parliament had retaliated against colonial protests by closing ports to commerce. In at least one celebrated American family divided over the Revolution, the father attempted to use

his wealth to curry the political favor of his son. According to one account, Benjamin Franklin had "offered to make over all his possessions" to his son William "during his own lifetime" if only William would "declare for the American cause."[56] If we judge by how James Habersham bequeathed his earthly possessions, it is apparent that paternal love transcended political views. On his death in August 1775, James Habersham left to his sons sufficient land and slaves to ensure their place at the top of Georgia's social and political structures. In distributing his vast holdings, he made no distinction among his offspring regarding their political views toward England. Each son inherited more than three thousand acres of land, carefully allotted so that each would receive equal amounts of prime arable land, including his named plantations along the Little Ogeechee. James received Silk Hope, Joseph got Beverley, and John took Dean Forrest. Habersham also divided his two hundred slaves equally among his sons.[57]

At almost the same time the sons inherited their wealth, King George put it all at risk with a royal proclamation dated August 23, 1775, declaring those who rebelled against Britain to be "traitors" whose treasonous acts must be punished.[58] Thus, in a final irony, the very government the father had so faithfully supported now threatened the land bequeathed by the Loyalist father to his Whig sons. Filial bonds that kept the Habersham family together did not extend to imperial politics. Unlike their father, who saw royal government as the foundation of Georgia's safety and prosperity as well as his own wealth and standing, the Habersham sons viewed the British connection as a threat to their lives, liberty, and property.

After the war, James Jr., Joseph, and John enjoyed the fruits of independence as prosperous merchants and planters and as responsible leaders in local, state, and national government. George Washington rewarded Joseph's service in the Continental Army by appointing him postmaster general of the United States in 1795, a position he held into the first Jefferson administration. Georgians recognized Joseph and John by sending them to the national Congress, and the Georgia General Assembly selected James Jr. as Speaker of the Assembly. While their war records assured them prominence in Georgia society and politics, the Habersham sons, as well as Georgians in general, were also indebted to their father. James Habersham did not join the revolutionary movement, but he helped make Georgia strong enough to separate successfully from the mother country and assume its place in the new republic as a prosperous, vigorous state.

NOTES

Introduction

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Chapter One. London: Merchant Apprentice

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3. *Minute Books of the Governors and of the Corporation of Beverley,* Manuscript Collection, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Archives and Record Service, MSS BC/11/7/6, 1707–36.

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7. Cited in Elrington, *Victoria History of the County of York,* 2.

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9. *St. Mary's Burial Register,* Manuscript Collection, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, MSS. PE/1/4, Archives and Record Service.

10. Ibid., 3, 19.

11. Ibid., 127. For James Habersham's becoming a freeman, see *Minute Books of the Governors,* January 30, 1712.

12. Ibid., September 25, 1727, October 16, 1727, September 23, 1728. For James's death, see *St. Mary's Burial Register,* PE/1/4, November 14, 1729.

13. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, 1742), 3:171–72.

14. For the occupational breakdown in Beverley in the eighteenth century, see Elrington, *Victoria History of the County of York,* 6:114.

15. Ibid., 6:116.

16. Defoe, *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain,* 3:171–72.

17. Ibid., 3:173, 178–79.

18. Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 1994), 132–33.

19. Ibid., 136.

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